

READERS' Q&A: WARREN HUGHES

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MOTORSPORT NEWS

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The Flying Geordie tackles his toughest test to date: the MN posers p20

Lewis and Max will take it to the limit this weekend

By Matt James

Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen will go toe-to-toe for the 2022 Formula 1 title in Abu Dhabi this weekend as they enter the event dead level on points.

Hamilton won a controversial Saudi Arabian Grand Prix on Sunday where the pair made contact as a penalised Verstappen was forced to cede first place following an off-track overtake on his title rival.

The Red Bull man backed off on a straight which meant Hamilton could not avoid contact with his adversary. Hamilton said it was only a cool head which helped him to a third straight F1 win to turn up the points pressure.

Seven-time World champion Hamilton said: "I really had to try and just keep my cool out there, which was really difficult to do."

"I've raced a lot of drivers in my life, in the 28 years [I have been racing]. I've come across a lot of different characters. There's a few at the top which are... yeah, over the limit. Rules kinda don't apply, or they don't think of the rules."

Full report, p4

DEADLOCK!

LEWIS
369.5 POINTS

MAX
369.5 POINTS



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Verstappen seemed rattled as he held off rival Lewis Hamilton in a robust grand prix

TAKING IT DOWN TO THE WIRE

Have you caught your breath yet? The first Saudi Arabian Grand Prix was a whirlwind from start to finish and has set up one of the most dramatic title showdowns for more than a decade.

Max Verstappen's ham-fisted attempts to keep Lewis Hamilton behind him in the Middle East rightly earned him a slap on the wrists after the flag had fallen. His Mercedes rival, by contrast, kept his head and managed to claw himself level with the Red Bull driver on points with just one race remaining.

Three wins on the trot have enabled Hamilton to match his rival, and it is hard not to think that the British racer, who is on the cusp of creating history with an eighth crown, is driving at a level he never has before. His titles are all meritorious, but this battle has taken him to higher highs than he has ever had to reach before.

While Max was rightly told off by the stewards for his part in brake-testing Hamilton in a very dangerous fashion on Sunday, the raft of penalties that have been meted out in the last few races have come dangerously close to overshadowing what is actually happening on the circuit. Sure, transgressions need to be addressed, but wouldn't it be a shame if the fight for this year's crown came down to a discussion in the stewards' room? Let's hope that it doesn't come to that and Max and Lewis can give us the Formula 1 showdown that will have everyone talking.

Elsewhere in this week's Motorsport News, we look back on the punishing Roger Albert Clark Rally, and have all the action from the third round of the Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship event from Donington Park. We also take a look at the 'World Cup of Hillclimbing', as Paul Lawrence talks to British competitor Alex Summers after the recent FIA Hillclimb Masters in Portugal.

One of Britain's lost talents, Warren Hughes, is the subject of our readers' Q&A and is full and frank in his answers, while Luke Barry takes an in-depth look back at the story of this season's British Rally Championship and rates his top 10 drivers of the season.

Nick Garton also tells the emotional tale of the Williams FW07 that performed demonstration laps in Saudi Arabia last week, in a poignant reflection on the early achievements of the Williams team and its recently departed leader Frank Williams. It is enough to remind you that motorsport does actually have a heart.

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The racer-turned-coach reflects on a career of 'sliding doors' moments

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How Matt Edwards hung in until the end in the BRC

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FORMULA 1 REPORT: SAUDI ARABIA GP

Photos: Motorsport Images



Collision course: Max tries to pass Lewis



It was all smiles for the Mercedes crew with a double podium finish

MAX TAKES IT TO THE LIMIT AS LEWIS LANDS THE WIN

Saudi Arabia’s first grand prix was epic. By **James Roberts**



Alpine ace Esteban Ocon was in the middle of action



Verstappen was penalised after the chequered flag

F1 RESULTS

SAUDI ARABIA GRAND PRIX
Laps: 50 Track: Jeddah Corniche Circuit

	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	2h6m15.118s
2	Max Verstappen	Red Bull-Honda	+21.825s
3	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	+27.531s
4	Esteban Ocon	Alpine-Renault	+27.633s
5	Daniel Ricciardo	McLaren-Mercedes	+40.121s
6	Pierre Gasly	AlphaTauri-Honda	+41.613s
7	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	+44.475s
8	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	+46.606s
9	Antonio Giovinazzi	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	+58.505s
10	Lando Norris	McLaren-Mercedes	+1m01.358s

11 Lance Stroll (Aston Martin-Mercedes) +1m17.212s; 12 Nicholas Latifi (Williams-Mercedes) +1m23.249s; 13 Fernando Alonso (Alpine-Renault) -1lap; 14 Yuki Tsunoda (AlphaTauri-Honda) -1lap; 15 Kimi Raikkonen (Alfa Romeo-Ferrari) -1lap; 16 Sebastian Vettel (Aston Martin-Mercedes) 44 laps/accident damage; 17 Sergio Perez (Red Bull-Honda) 14 laps/accident; 18 Nikita Mazepin (Haas-Ferrari) 14 laps/accident; 19 George Russell (Williams-Mercedes) 14 laps/accident; 20 Mick Schumacher (Haas-Ferrari) 8laps/accident. **Drivers' championship:** 1 Verstappen 369.5 points; 2 Hamilton 369.5; 3 Bottas 218; 4 Perez 190; 5 Leclerc 158; 6 Norris 154. **Constructors' championship:** 1 Mercedes 587.5 points; 2 Red Bull 559.5; 3 Ferrari 307.5; 4 McLaren 269; 5 Alpine 149; 6 AlphaTauri 120.



George Russell was frustrated after a restart accident

An absolutely wild first-ever grand prix in Saudi Arabia has set up a winner-takes-all championship decider in Abu Dhabi this coming weekend.

In an epic season of flashpoints between Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen, last Sunday’s 50-lap race around the floodlit Jeddah Corniche Circuit produced a handful more – including a dramatic moment when Hamilton ran into the back of Verstappen.

The British driver just managed to steer clear of the mayhem to take his 103rd win, plus with the bonus point for fastest lap. He now heads to Abu Dhabi tied on 369.5 points with his arch-rival.

The close proximity of the concrete barriers on F1’s newest venue – the longest and fastest street circuit in the sport – was expected to produce drama. And it certainly delivered.

The action began in qualifying when Verstappen was set to record one of the most amazing pole position laps of all time – until he hit the wall rounding the final corner. It meant he could only manage third on the grid.

Once the race was underway, Mercedes looked comfortable in the early stages, Hamilton leading his team-mate Valtteri Bottas and Verstappen. But the GP suddenly took its first dramatic turn when the safety car was deployed on lap 10. Mick Schumacher had crashed his Haas into the

Turn 22 barriers, which prompted the leading Merics to pits for fresh rubber. Verstappen stayed out and suddenly benefited when the red flag was flown to repair the damage to the barriers. That enabled him to change tyres during the stoppage.

As luck would have it, Verstappen finally got his pole position as the race resumed once more. But at the restart Hamilton made the better getaway and led into Turn 1. In refusing to concede the position, Verstappen ran over the kerbs to retake the lead.

Behind them was more chaos. The Ferrari of Charles Leclerc hit the rear of Sergio Perez, which spun the Red Bull in front of the pack. At the back an unsighted Nikita Mazepin smashed into the Williams of George Russell and out came the red flag once more.

After reviewing Max’s move across the kerbs to pass Hamilton, the FIA decided to reverse the positions on the grid for the second restart. This time it was Verstappen who made the better getaway and took the lead heading into Turn 1.

Hamilton emerged also behind the Alpine of Esteban Ocon, but was soon back on the tail of his nemesis. On lap 37, Hamilton made his move to wrestle the lead from his title rival. He dived to the outside of Turn 1 but, as in Brazil two races ago, Verstappen braked deep and ran wide.

Further around the lap, Red Bull instructed Max to give the place back “strategically.” On the approach to the DRS detection line before the final corner,

Verstappen slowed on the straight, dropping down from eighth to third gear. Hamilton was cautious and didn’t attempt a pass. Then suddenly he hit the back of the Red Bull, while trying to avoid contact.

“I didn’t understand what was going on. It was confusing and all of a sudden he was backing up,” said Hamilton. “I wondered if he was trying to play some crazy tactic? Then he braked so hard I nearly went up over the back of him, so swerved out.

“For him, it didn’t matter if we both didn’t finish and it was clear others around us were prepared to take it to all sorts of levels in order to overtake, so I tried to keep it on the track and stay out of trouble.”

Two laps later the Red Bull yielded P1 to Hamilton just before Turn 27 but immediately repassed him before the pair had reached the apex of the corner. Then the stewards decided Verstappen should be penalised for his Turn 1 antics and awarded the Dutchman a five-second time penalty. With his medium tyres worn, the race was effectively over at this stage and Hamilton took the lead with just seven laps of the race to go.

In a race with two red flags, four Virtual Safety Cars (to clear away debris from numerous on-track scraps) and multiple incidents between the two title protagonists, the inaugural Saudi Arabian Grand Prix will live long in the memory.

With Verstappen leading the points, thanks to his nine wins to Hamilton’s eight, what final twist awaits these two in Abu Dhabi this coming weekend?

Horner pledges to pull out all the stop to help Verstappen’s title bid

Team boss Christian Horner has said Red Bull will do “everything we can” to give Max Verstappen a shot at winning his first Formula 1 World title in Abu Dhabi on Sunday.

After Verstappen finished second to Hamilton in Saudi Arabia, he said he was

“frustrated and annoyed” with the result.

Long after the chequered flag had flown, the stewards gave Verstappen a 10-second penalty and two licence points for his “erratic” braking on lap 37 of the Saudi race, when he was instructed to hand Hamilton the lead.

Verstappen kept his second place but refused to celebrate on the podium. When voted the driver of the day, Max said in reply: “What happened today is unbelievable. This sport is more about penalties than racing.” Horner added: “We felt hard done by with the incidents.”

Mercedes: one hand on the constructors’ trophy with Bottas charge

Mercedes has virtually sealed this year’s constructors’ championship after Valtteri Bottas stole third place with a photo finish dash to the finish line.

Bottas pipped the Alpine of Esteban Ocon by just 0.102 seconds with a mighty run out of the final corner in the Saudi

Arabian Grand Prix. Mercedes now lead Red Bull in the teams’ standings by 28 points with just one race remaining.

Ocon was cruelly denied a podium finish after a strong race for the Alpine driver. He had benefited from the first corner skirmish between Lewis Hamilton and

Max Verstappen to line up in the second restart from pole position.

“We gave it everything we could,” said the Frenchman. “The car was spot on and mega to drive. We held third place for a very long time and lost it five metres from the end – that’s what cost us the podium.”

RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

Smeets joins Williams
Williams has signed the former team manager of Volkswagen's World Rally Championship team, Sven Smeets, to work alongside his former colleague Jost Capito at the head of the Formula 1 team. Smeets has taken the role of sporting director and will be in charge of the young driver academy. Meanwhile, Capito was forced to miss the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix after testing positive for Covid.

Vettel's stance
Four-time F1 World champion Sebastian Vettel hosted a female-only kart race in Saudi Arabia in the lead up to last weekend's grand prix. Concerns had been raised before the event about equality in the country and Vettel decided to take a stand by organising the race. The Aston Martin racer said: "We set up a nice event and I was trying to pass on some of my experiences in life and on track. I have to say I was inspired by their stories and their background and the positivity about the change in the country."

Fontana reunited
Argentinean racer Norberto Fontana has been reunited with a crash helmet that was stolen 23 years previously when thieves broke into the former Sauber driver's home. Fontana received the helmet, which he had used during F1 testing in 1996, 10 days ago after a fellow racer happened to spot it being worn by a motorbike rider in the street. On social media, Fontana said: "I knew some day I would be able to find that helmet because when people see those colours, they know that they are mine."

Aitken's Indy test
British rising star Jack Aitken was due to take part in an IndyCar test with Ed Carpenter Racing at Sebring as Motorsport News closed for press and could be in the frame for a race deal. The Williams junior driver, who raced for the British team at the Sakhir Grand Prix last term as a stand-in for George Russell, could be in line to take part in the road and street course events should an opening arise.

Barnicoat goes alone
Ben Barnicoat has parted ways with McLaren after a relationship stretching back five seasons. The former single-seater racer was, most recently, part of the British team's GT3 programme. He had raced in the Intercontinental GT Challenge, the GT World Challenge Europe, the GT World Challenge American and the IMSA series in the Woking firm's 720S model. Barnicoat said: "I [McLaren] gave me the chance to progress, shaping me into the driver that I've become. I'll never forget these years where I have earned my stripes as a professional driver thanks to their support."

BTCC TO RUN AT MAXIMUM CAPACITY IN 2022

A field of 32 top-flight tin-tops will take on the championship's hybrid era

Photo: Jakob Ebrey, Motorsport Images



Bumper field will take on 2022 BTCC

By Matt James

Bosses of the British Touring Car Championship have released three extra licences to compete in the series in 2022 after requests from teams.

The grid ran with 29 machines in 2021 but series chief executive Alan Gow had three of the permits to compete, the TOCA BTCC Licences (TBLs), held back in reserve as he aimed to limit entry numbers.

However, after talks, he has issued an extra TBL to Honda squads Team Dynamics and BTC Racing, plus there is one additional entry for Toyota team Speedworks Motorsport.

Gow explained: "At our annual teams meeting last month the majority of team owners voted

LICENCES	
TOCA BTCC 2022	
TEAM	LICENCES
Excelr8 Motorsport	4
Team Dynamics	3*
Aiden Moffat Racing	2
Motorbase Performance	4
Team Hard	3
Speedworks Motorsport	3*
WSR	3
Ciceley Motorsport	2
Power Maxed Racing	2
BTC Racing	4*
Boardley Motorsport	2

* = one TBL on loan from TOCA

for TOCA to provide the loan of our spare TBLs, to help satisfy requirements [for demand].
"Therefore, I've released our three TBLs on a single-season-only loan basis. This means the grid will now increase to its absolute maximum of 32 cars for next season.
"The demand for the BTCC has never been greater. Clearly, this also means I've failed to achieve my long-stated aim of reducing the grid size. While that remains the goal going forward, admittedly it's a nice problem to have..."

MORE SPRINT RACES PLOTTED FOR NEW SEASON

The six venues for next season's Formula 1 Sprint qualifying races have been revealed with three in Europe and three set for long-haul events – although it is not expected to feature on the British Grand Prix schedule at Silverstone.
The new initiative was introduced in 2021 and ran at three events – Silverstone, Monza and Interlagos. Teams embraced the idea and it will expand in 2022.
According to reports in Autosport, the proposed locations for the extra Saturday races in 2022 are at the Bahrain Grand Prix at Sakhir, the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix at Imola, the



Six sprint races are planned for the 2022 F1 season

Canadian Grand Prix in Montreal, the Austrian race at the Red Bull Ring, the Dutch GP at Zandvoort and at Interlagos in Brazil.
It has previously been mooted that there should be

more World championship points on offer for the Sprint qualifying races. At present, the winner gets three points, the second-placed finisher gets two and there is one on offer for third spot.

PIASTRI NEARS F2 TITLE WITH WIN

Australian Oscar Piastri has edged closer to the Formula 2 title with victory in the feature race in Saudi Arabia in a race which was marked by some sizeable accidents.
Enzo Fittipaldi careered into the stalled car of Theo Pourchaire at the start of the third race in the Middle East and Fittipaldi broke a heel in the shunt. Piastri led from the restart but the race was shorted after another crash between Olli Caldwell and Guilherme Samaia brought out the chequered flag prematurely.

New Alfa Romeo F1 signing and Piastri's title rival Guanyu Zhou made a mistake in the opening sprint race and finished outside the points. That race was won by Marcus Armstrong, whose DAMS car led home the Hitech machine of Liam Lawson. Piastri's win in the second sprint race had come after a battle with Jehan Daruvala (Carlin), with the latter penalised late on for running off track.
There are three races remaining in the contest at Abu Dhabi this weekend.



Piastri has a lead to defend going into the Formula 2 finale



Holdsworth and Mostert won in Oz

HOLDEN OFF THE OPPOSITION AT BATHURST

The Walkinshaw United Andretti team took victory in the Bathurst 1000 last weekend as Holden Commodore ZB pairing Chaz Mostert and Lee Holdsworth claimed a three-second win.
The pairing was in

command early on but were delayed when a rear tyre delaminated during Mostert's opening stint. That meant they were pitting out of sequence but climbed back up the order to top spot. Mostert fended off Triple Eight Racing's Shane van Gisbergen (sharing

with Garth Tander) late on. However, the pressure was off when the Triple Eight Holden had a tyre issue with seven laps remaining.
Cameron Walters and James Moffet inherited second place in their Tickford Racing Ford Mustang GT.

ROSSI HINTS AT SPORTSCAR FUTURE WITH ABU DHABI OUTING

MotoGP legend Valentino Rossi will take part in the Gulf 12 Hours at the Yas Marina circuit in Abu Dhabi early next year and says he could be tempted to take part in further long-distance events.
The Italian, a seven-time MotoGP champion, has previously tackled the 12-hour event in 2019 and 2021. For his fresh assault, Rossi will once again partner his half-brother Luca Marini and countryman Alessio Salucci in a Ferrari 488 GT3 Evo. The event takes place on January 8.
Speaking on an IMSA social media channel last week, Rossi, 42, said: "Every year I try to make one or two races in cars. From next year I will race GT cars in endurance races and championships; at the moment it is not decided [in which series] yet."
Rossi has also hinted at a longer-term ambition to tackle endurance racing's blue riband Le Mans 24 Hours.



Rossi has racing ambitions

RACING NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Motorsport Images



Chambers surveyed

TEAM EFFORT FRAMES NEW BRITISH F4

New British Formula 4 organiser Motorsport UK said it consulted 15 or 16 current and potential competing teams in designing the relaunched formula for next season.

Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers said: “We’re in it to create the best playing field for the best talent in the world, and the way that we did that was to work with the teams: the existing F4 teams, and we [also] had very much an open door. “We had probably 15 or 16 teams involved in the debate, and we did actual proper questionnaires and surveys to ask what they wanted in the championship.

“Then when we got to the technical decision as to which chassis manufacturer, which power unit, which tyres, it was all done in collaboration with the teams.

“It would have been an awful lot easier if we’d sat in a room and [said] we’ll do that, that and that. But that would have been a disaster because the teams have to know they own the whole enterprise. We’ve attracted new teams into the championship, getting Virtuosi in, getting Hitech in.”



Richards wants to see change



Sulayem (left, with Fernando Alonso) FIA President bid has got a boost from Britain

MOTORSPORT UK BACKS BEN SULAYEM FOR FIA PRESIDENT

British organisations turn back on British candidate to get behind Mohammed ben Sulayem bid

By Graham Keilloh

Motorsport UK will vote for Mohammed ben Sulayem to be FIA President later this month after preferring his push for change to that of British rival candidate Graham Stoker.

Stoker, outgoing president Jean Todt’s deputy for sport, and former

rally driver Sulayem, compete for the FIA Presidency in a December 17 vote, considered a tight race.

The RAC simultaneously confirmed its support for Sulayem.

Richards said: “The team for Mohammed, they haven’t got all the answers, but they do accept there’s need for change and we feel that in these turbulent times

and what’s going on ahead of us that that’s what’s required.

“We can’t accept ‘just trust us, it’ll be business as usual, it’ll all be fine’, I honestly don’t think this is right in this day and age. So our vote is going to go to Mohammed ben Sulayem’s team.”

Upon being asked why the British governing body was not

supporting a British candidate, Richards said: “Isn’t that the very traditional way sports federations have voted in the past? It’s not a partisan decision, this is a decision made out of solid, conscious interrogation of the proposals.”

Richards said too that, after both candidates presented to a streamed ‘hustings’, Stoker’s team would

not allow Stoker’s presentation video to be shared with Motorsport UK members.

“[This] was somewhat confusing and a big surprise,” Richards said. “On our website you will see the Mohammed ben Sulayem video shown in its entirety. It certainly doesn’t sit well with us that we can’t share this information.”

BARC SELECTED AS BRITISH F4’S LOCAL ORGANISER CLUB

The British Automobile Racing Club has been selected as the British Formula 4 championship’s organiser club for next season onwards.

Motorsport UK earlier this year was confirmed as British F4’s new organiser for three seasons from 2022, taking over from RacingLine which had the British Racing and Sports Car Club as its administering club.

Motorsport UK later launched

a tender for an organising club to co-promote and act as local organiser for British F4.

BARC currently fulfils a similar role for the rest of the TOCA package on which British F4 runs.

Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers said: “Having a strong organising team off-circuit creates a positive, enjoyable environment for competitors on track, and

in a season where much will be different as the series embarks on a new era, their wealth of experience will be a valuable resource for the series.”

BARC chief executive Ben Taylor added: “It is the most prestigious single-seater championship in the country, and we are proud that the governing body has entrusted its new operation into the hands of the UK’s oldest racing club.”



BARC won tender to help organise revised British F4



Walker got to try GB4’s car at Bedford Autodrome

FF1600 STAR WALKER EYES GB4 AFTER TEST

Formula Ford frontrunner Alex Walker has said the new GB4 championship is “definitely an option” for next year after sampling its car in a Bedford Autodrome test last week.

The 18-year-old, who won nine National Formula Ford races this year and led the championship for much of the season, completed around 60 laps of the Bedford Autodrome West circuit.

Walker said: “There’s some

really good teams involved in GB4, which is positive. With the championship, if you base it off GB3, you know it’s going to be run well.

“From what I’ve heard, GB4 sounds quite affordable for what it is as well, which is obviously a big benefit in motorsport nowadays. It has a good car and the calendar will be good, and with the teams involved it’ll be a very

competitive championship.”

Walker added that he hopes to finalise his plans for 2022 before Christmas. “We’ll now assess the field and see what comes about,” he said.

“We’re going into the holiday time now but we’d like to get something planned for next year and sorted before Christmas really so that we can put a proper testing programme in and we can do the season properly.”

KMR SET FOR GB4 MULTI-CAR ENTRY

Successful Formula Ford team Kevin Mills Racing has officially confirmed it will have a minimum two-car entry in the new GB4 championship in 2022.

The team has ordered two Tatuus F4-T014 cars from organiser MSV, is close to announcing its first driver plus is considering a third car due to the interest. Team boss Kevin Mills is hopeful one seat will be filled by his 16-year-old son Tom.

KMR is a five-time Walter Hayes Trophy winner as well as a Formula Ford Festival winner and National Formula Ford champion.

Mills said: “We’ve run cars in the Formula Ford Ecoboost, and I did have some involvement with BARC Renault for a while, so I’ve run some slicks-and-wings cars but not a modern one like this. We’ve got quite a lot of help and information from some people that have been involved with that type of car previously, so we’ll be OK and can transfer our success over.”

GINETTA JUNIOR HOPE HENRY STAYS WITH FOX FOR 2022

The 2021 Ginetta Junior Scholarship winner Maurice Henry will remain with Fox Motorsport next season following impressive showings in last month’s winter series.

The 16-year-old had his first season of car racing this year after jointly winning the Ginetta Junior scholarship

alongside Robert de Haan.

Henry took 18 points finishes in the main Ginetta Junior championship, then in the Ginetta Junior winter series at Brands Hatch last month claimed a career-best third in qualifying and then a fifth on race day after fighting in an intense six-car

battle for second place.

Henry will join at Fox next year 2021 series runner-up Liam McNeilly as well as Jacob Hodgkiss, who joined Fox for the winter series. One Fox seat remains available in what is anticipated to be a four-car line-up.

Henry said: “We made

progress through the year. I’m in a pretty similar place now that my team-mate Liam was at the end of year one, and he was a title contender this season. That’s where I want to be: making a big step, improving the pace and the consistency and fighting much closer to the front.”



Henry is back with Fox

BRITISH GT STARS KEEN AND IGOE REMAIN AT WPI FOR '22

Keen seeks to take British GT title at last after “no brainer” decision for WPI pairing to continue

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Steve Hindle, Praga



WPI entry was '21's only multiple overall winner

By Graham Keilloh

British GT frontrunners Phil Keen and Michael Igoe are returning to the championship with WPI Motorsport next season in an unchanged Lamborghini Huracan GT3 line-up.

Keen and Igoe, who were the only multiple overall British GT race winners this year, will team up for a second season with WPI.

Keen holds the record for most overall British GT race wins at 19, but has yet to take the crown despite heading to the final round as title contender in each of the last six seasons.

“It’s about time we changed that statistic, don’t you think?,” Keen said. “There were occasions this year, like Brands Hatch, where we had the measure of everyone, but others – and especially during the mid-season slump with the mystery handling issue – when we were nowhere.

“It was a real Jekyll-and-Hyde campaign that proved consistency wins British GT



Keen and Igoe paired up this year

titles rather than occasional strong showings. Still, the team definitely took a step forwards compared with 2019 and '20.”

Igoe added: “Phil’s one of the fastest guys out there but he also understands championships are usually won and lost by the amateur, whoever they’re racing for. I learnt a lot and improved as a driver thanks to having some consistency, as well as a driver of his calibre, on the other side of the garage throughout the year. It was a no brainer to continue together.”

REDLINE AND DORLIN SWITCH TO LAMBORGHINI FOR BRITISH GT

Redline Racing next year will undertake its first major non-Porsche programme racing in British GT with a GT3 Lamborghini in which Alex Malykhin and Porsche Sprint Challenge champion James Dorlin will share driving duties.

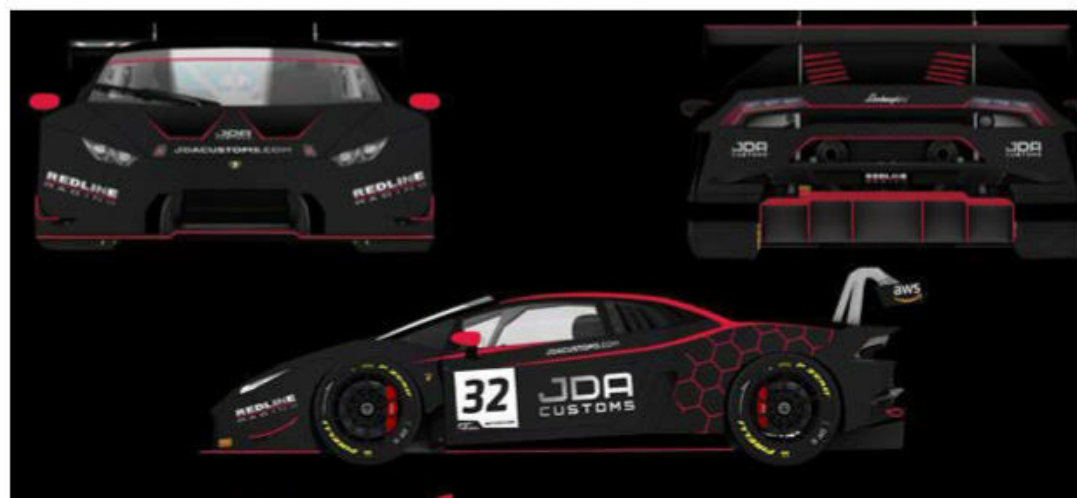
The squad has taken 11 Porsche Carrera Cup GB overall drivers’ titles, including this year’s crown with Dan Cammish. The team shook down its new Lamborghini Huracan at Silverstone last month with the help of British GT champion, Sandy Mitchell.

Redline’s Silver-Am duo is led by 22-year-old British GT4 race-winner Dorlin, who this season joined Redline for a Carrera Cup meeting and won both races

during a Sprint Challenge GB outing with the team. Dorlin’s most recent British GT appearance was in 2020’s season-closer in a MSL/Newbridge GT4 Aston Martin, at the same meeting where he clinched his Sprint Challenge title.

Dorlin also coached Malykhin to second in this year’s Sprint Challenge GB Am standings during the Anglo-Belarusian’s first season of racing. The pair have also shared GT Cup class victory.

Dorlin said: “Alex has also come on leaps and bounds since the start of the year. We could have gone down the traditional GT4 route but, honestly, now he’s had a season with the Cayman I think he’s capable of moving up straight away.”



Multiple Porsche champion Redline to try GT3 Lamborghini Huracan



Famous car designer Stephenson designed the R1's livery

£150K R1 UP FOR GRABS FOR PRAGA CUP WINNER

The owner of the Praga R1 that wins next year’s inaugural one-make Praga Cup is set to receive a prize R1 called ‘Frank’ after famous car designer Frank Stephenson.

The £150,000 car – which can be won by a team or individual – has a bespoke livery designed by Stephenson incorporating various Praga-related colours and features. It was raced in this year’s Britcar championship by Miles Lacey and automotive influencer Mr JWW.

The £200,000-plus prize pot also includes seats at an end-of-season endurance race, entry into

the 2023 season and Praga karts.

Praga Cars UK managing director Mark Harrison said: “We are fully committed to ensuring the first one-make Praga series is a huge success. By committing to there being at least 16 cars on the grid in 2022 and 2023 and giving a car away that has turned heads all season we are making our intentions clear.

“We are seeing strong demand for Praga R1s ahead of the 2022 race series, so we may have to sell this car, in which case the winner will receive a 2022 season-used factory car.”



Cowley to resume GT4 Europe

COWLEY AND ACADEMY RETURN TO GT4 EUROPE

British GT4 runner-up Matt Cowley is to return to the GT4 European Series in 2022 with Academy Motorsport in Multimatic’s Ford Mustang after a two-year Covid-related hiatus.

Cowley started his GT career in the European contest with Academy as part of Aston Martin Racing’s Young Driver programme but switched to British GT in 2020 amid the pandemic’s implications. With travel restrictions now eased, Cowley will lead the team’s assault on the continental series.

Academy boss Matt Nicoll-Jones said: “The deal with Multimatic and Ford was inked well before Covid hit. From the outset, the plan was to run a two-car campaign, in Europe and at home in British GT. With cross-Channel travel now back at a level where we can realistically manage both programmes, we’re looking forward to finally showing what Matt and the Mustang are capable of.”

Nicoll-Jones added Cowley’s British GT driving partner Will Moore is staying with the squad and Academy’s priority is selecting a silver-graded partner for Cowley. “Multimatic have given us a brilliant car and we know that the right pairing will see us straight away challenging for honours,” Nicoll-Jones said. “If they [the new driver] want to race in British GT as well, that’s even better.”

GREYSTONE GT SET FOR ENDURANCE STEP-UP IN GULF 12 HOURS

GT Cup squad Greystone GT will compete in its first major endurance race next month entering a McLaren 570S GT4 in the Gulf 12 Hours in Abu Dhabi on January 8.

The GT4-class McLaren will be raced by the team’s regular GT Cup pair Iain Campbell and professional co-driver European Le Mans Series champion Oli Webb. And at Abu Dhabi they’ll be

joined by 2019 Ferrari Challenge UK champion Jamie Clarke.

Noted track and test day outfit Greystone GT made the move into racing in 2021 with multiple McLarens racing in the GT Cup.

Campbell therein alongside Webb completed his first season of racing, and the pair took four podium finishes in the same McLaren they’ll race in Abu

Dhabi. Campbell then took his maiden career win on his Pure McLaren GT Series debut weekend at Austin.

Team principal Mark McLoughlin said: “It’s incredibly exciting to be taking on our first real endurance contest at the Gulf 12 Hours. We’re under no illusions; this will be the most difficult race we’ve ever entered against a truly international line-up of teams.”



Webb and Campbell go to Gulf

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RALLY NEWS

M-SPORT TIGHT-LIPPED ON LOEB'S DRIVE IN 2022 WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Frenchman has tested, but there is no news on a competitive return – just yet

Photo: M-Sport, mcklein-imagedatabase.com

By Graham Lister

M-Sport has until December 17 to confirm Sebastien Loeb – the driver that company chief Malcolm Wilson always wanted to sign – for its Monte Carlo Rally line-up.

Entries for the 2022 World championship season opener close a week tomorrow (Friday) with Loeb strongly linked to a Ford Puma Rally1 from the Cumbria-based squad.

While team principal Richard Millener has sidestepped questions on M-Sport's driver attack for round one of the upcoming 13-event WRC season, the chances of an alliance with the nine-time World champion are increasing.

Following an extensive test in the French Alps late last month, where Loeb was on duty along with Craig Breen, Adrien Fourmaux and Gus Greensmith, Millener told WRC.com: "I'm not going to talk about individuals who were in the



Loeb in the frame for Monte

car, but it's fair to say we made very good progress across all of the drivers. I'm happy with where we are right now. The team is really coming together so well as we look ahead to 2022."

While no confirmation has been forthcoming from M-Sport, a Loeb/Adrien Fourmaux car share is understood to be one possibility with

the Frenchmen contesting partial campaigns alongside full-timers Craig Breen and Gus Greensmith.

If 47-year-old Loeb, the nine-time World champion, did make a shock return to the sport that he once dominated, it would be without long-term co-driver Daniel Elena.

Although Loeb announced last May that his Dakar Rally bid next month would be with new navigator Fabian Lurquin, Elena was by Loeb's side when they contested the French championship-counting Rallye Mont-Blanc Morzine in early September. The Monegasque was expected to make further sporadic appearances with Loeb but instead announced his retirement last week.

M-Sport has yet to comment on Fourmaux's programme for 2022. The French youngster tackled eight World rounds this season in a Fiesta WRC, finishing fifth on his debut in Croatia last April.



M-Sport has put more miles on its new Ford Puma Rally1 machine



Oliver Solberg, Ott Tanak and Thierry Neuville all sampled i20 N

HYUNDAI RAMPS UP TESTING INTENSITY WITH HYBRID MACHINE

The first Hyundai rally car penned by renowned former M-Sport WRC designer Christian Loriaux has begun testing.

Following initial running at a venue close to Hyundai Motorsport's base in Alzenau, near Frankfurt in Germany, the all-new i20 N WRC Rally1 was subjected to more intensive testing in France last week.

"We have redesigned the [transmission] casing, [the] internals and we have redesigned the rear differential too to make it different," Hyundai Motorsport boss Andrea Adamo was quoted as saying. "The propshaft is different because we modified the lines, but the driveshaft has been modified to match with the new stuff. The upright

is different. Every piece has been redone in this car."

The French test was halted dramatically last Saturday after Belgian pairing Thierry Neuville and Martijn Wydaeghe went off the road.

The crew was treated at the scene by paramedics, with a shoulder injury for co-driver Wydaeghe giving greatest concern.

INGRASSIA LAUDS OGIER'S TITLE-WINNING ABILITY

Julien Ingrassia signed off from his co-driving career as an eight-time World champion on Rally Monza last month by praising his driver Sebastien Ogier.

Ingrassia and Ogier began competing together in 2006 and made their debut in the World championship two years later. After winning the JWRC in 2008, they won their first outright title with Volkswagen in 2013.

"A big bravo to Seb for having driven at these speeds for all these years with such precision and with such a rage to win without ever having been careless at the wheel, whatever the circumstances," Ingrassia said. "He's managed to cultivate his talent and post some insane statistics. We can both be proud of the work we've accomplished and the mark we've left on our sport."

"When we started in WRC we inherited a rich history with the achievements of Sebastien Loeb and Daniel Elena and we've been able to keep the series going, making sure that the French flag continues to fly right at the top of the pole."

"I'm particularly proud that during these 16 years we've managed to get through all the trials and tribulations by supporting each other in the good times and the difficult ones."

BELGIAN BID FOR EUROPEAN CONTEST FALLS FLAT

Ypres Rally organiser Club Superstage has pulled out of negotiations with WRC Promoter to return the event to the European championship and instead announced a late-June date for 2022 that clashes with the World championship-counting Safari Rally.

The move leaves the Tarmac contest without a top-level championship once again with the WRC not expected to return to the Belgian town until 2024.

Ypres chiefs were supposed to use those two seasons to iron out some of the organisational issues that occurred when it stepped up to the WRC last August in place of a planned UK round by hosting the ERC for the first time since 2016.

But with no suitable date on the table,

Club Superstage confirmed it would essentially be going it alone on June 23-25 with the Belgian championship the headline act. Club Superstage's Alain Penasse said: "We had an ambition to be part of the ERC. We negotiated for a long time with WRC Promoter for a suitable date but we couldn't find a date that was suitable."

The Safari clash will prevent an appearance by Belgium's top driver, Thierry Neuville, who has been an Ypres regular in recent seasons alongside his WRC commitments with Hyundai. However, following Penasse's departure as Hyundai team manager, the chances of Neuville returning to Ypres had always been called into question.



There will be no World or European action in Belgium next season

EXPANDED DAKAR RALLY FLEET FROM PRODRIVE

The Prodrive-run Bahrain Raid Xtreme team has upped its Dakar entry from two to three cars.

Argentine Orlando Terranova will join Sebastien Loeb and Nani Roma in a third Hunter T1+ powered by sustainable fuel for the opening

round of the new World Rally Raid Championship in Saudi Arabia.

"I have spoken to Nani and Seb and they said how good the new T1+ feels and that despite its greater size and additional weight, it still feels just as easy to drive and is

much better in the rocky conditions," said Terranova, who is contesting the Dakar for a 17th time.

Prodrive is due to test in the United Arab Emirates ahead of the Dakar taking place from January 2-14.

CONCERNS FOR INJURED DRIVER FRANCESCHI

Jean-Baptiste Franceschi suffered serious injuries in a crash on Rallye du Var last month – one week after winning the ERC3 and ERC3 Junior titles.

Franceschi, a JWRC event winner, was competing in a Renault Clio Rally4 and sustained injuries to his back and chest in the crash, although he's expected to make

a full recovery. Benoit Nogier, Alpine racing's commercial boss, said: "Our thoughts are with Jean-Baptiste Franceschi who was one of our best assets this season. We all wish Jean-Baptiste a speedy recovery."

Franceschi has secured a prize drive in a Ford Fiesta Rally3 in next year's ERC.

RALLY NEWS



Pryce gave his all in final

PRYCE GLAD TO GO DOWN FIGHTING IN BRC TITLE BATTLE

Osian Pryce insists he has no regrets after crashing out of the British Rally Championship title decider last month on the penultimate stage of the Ulster Rally.

The Welshman declared it was an innocent mistake that left his Polo on its roof in a field.

Pryce, who finished as runner-up in the BRC for the third time, said: "It is difficult to accept that one small moment has undone everyone's hard work and effort. Of all the heart-stopping moments we managed to get away with in the tricky conditions, it had to be the little innocent one that caught us out."

"Having been out of an R5 car for two years and away from the BRC for four, I have to be pleased with the season we've had."

"I certainly don't regret anything that's happened. I'd rather be fighting for victory and put the car on its roof than be two minutes behind and not understanding why."

Pryce bounced back from his disappointment to take a starring role in the marathon Roger Albert Clark Rally in his self-prepared Ford Escort Mk2. For the full story, see report on p14.

IRISH RALLY CALENDAR ANNOUNCED WITH SWEEPING CHANGES TO FORMAT

Right-hand-drive R5s to join National class, calendar restructured to maintain entries

Photos: Motorsport Images, William Neill, Martin Walsh



Irish rally classes and schedule revamped in 2022

PROPOSED 2022 CALENDAR

Irish Tarmac Rally Championship

RND	DATE	RALLY
1	February 5-6	Galway International Rally
2	March 19-20	West Cork International Rally
3	April 15-16	UAC Circuit of Ireland
4	April 30-May 1	Killarney International Rally
5	June 17-19	Donegal International Rally
6	July 30-31	Cork '20' International Rally
7*	August 19-20	Ulster Rally

* = The current proposed date of the Ulster Rally could be altered if Rally Northern Ireland is included on the WRC calendar.

By Martin Walsh

Motorsport Ireland has released the 2022 calendar and the Tarmac organisers have confirmed that right-hand-drive Ford Fiesta R5s will be eligible for the overall crown.

Tarmac Rally Organisers' Association chair Colman Hegarty told Motorsport News that right-hand-drive R5s will be

shown in Class 24. That means they will only be eligible to win the National section of any rallies, but they will also be allowed to score points in the primary Irish Tarmac Rally Championship. The main event – the International section – winners will be confined to those in homologated cars for Irish competition.

A recent meeting of Motorsport Ireland-affiliated clubs centred

on running events on a two-year cycle in a 2022-2023 calendar, aimed at reducing the number of events. As a result of this discussion and agreement, the nominated TROA rounds will run annually, but National events will be held on a two-year cycle starting from next season.

Although the 2022 national events have been designated, the green light has yet to be given by Motorsport Ireland for a series,

along with its Forest (Gravel) counterpart. Motorsport News understands a decision on this is imminent.

The events that will form the Irish National series are: Mayo (March 6); Birr (April 3); Monaghan (April 24); Carlow (May 15); Circuit of Munster (June 5); Tipperary Stonethrowers (July 17); Galway Summer (August 28) and Donegal Harvest (October 8).

In addition, a total of three gravel events have been proposed for 2022, which are the Willie Loughman Carrick on Suir (February 20), Munster Moonraker (July 2) and Jim Walsh Cork Forest Rally (August 14). Other events on the 2022 calendar are: Wexford Rally (September 10-11), GSMC Mini Stage Rally (September 25) and Kerry Winter Rally (November 13).



Post-Covid rally boom anticipated in Ireland for 2022

FLANAGAN: ITRC WILL BE FULL OF TALENT IN '22

Irish Tarmac Rally Championship boss Paddy Flanagan is tipping the cross-border series to return bigger and better in 2022 following a two-year hiatus.

The last points-scoring rounds was the Galway Hills Rally in 2020, when Alastair Fisher took his first Tarmac win in a Volkswagen Polo GTI R5.

With no national series to contest given rallying's cancellation amid the health pandemic, top Irish stars such as

the Moffett brothers – Sam and Josh, both winners of the championship – as well as Garry Jennings headed for the British Championship.

Jonny Greer, meanwhile, decided to stay closer to home and went on to clinch the Northern Ireland Championship title for a second time.

With the end of the long wait in sight, Flanagan feels that next season could go down in history as one of the greatest ever with

the revival of the Irish sport.

"Even at this early stage it's shaping up to be a fantastic title battle," he told Motorsport News. "We have many of the regulars returning and there is the real prospect for one, maybe two drivers from the UK who could join them. If they do, the level of competition will go up another level... I think the fact the British Championship isn't coming to Ireland next year has increased interest."

"People want to go rallying and that makes my job that bit easier," he added. "The break did all of the organising team good but at the same time we have missed the buzz of it all. Everyone has missed the Tarmac series, from the marshals to the timekeepers to the guys back in the service park. They have been starved of motorsport action and I speak for everyone when I say the return of the Irish Tarmac Championship can't come a day too soon."

IRISH ACE McNULTY RETURNING TO ACTION IN 2022

Irish Tarmac and National rally champion Tim McNulty will return to rallying in an ex-M-Sport Ford Fiesta R5 Rally2 in next season's domestic Tarmac contest.

In 2011, McNulty became the first driver to win both the Irish Tarmac and National titles in the same season, driving a Subaru Impreza WRC. His most recent outing was also at the 2016

Galway International, which ended when he crashed his Mini WRC on the opening stage.

Speaking to Motorsport News, McNulty said: "The plan is to do the Tarmac Championship and selected rounds of the National series. There is no way I am going to be on the pace of the top Tarmac boys of the moment, they are very quick."

The 54-year-old explained his

comeback, "I'm going back because I want to go up 'the Gap' [Molls Gap] again; I want to drive Fanad Head; I want to do Galway, West Cork and all the others and drive those real stages again, events run by great clubs and volunteers. It's a great feeling to drive those stages and, you know, I might pull a fastest time... if I smell a fastest time, I will go for it."

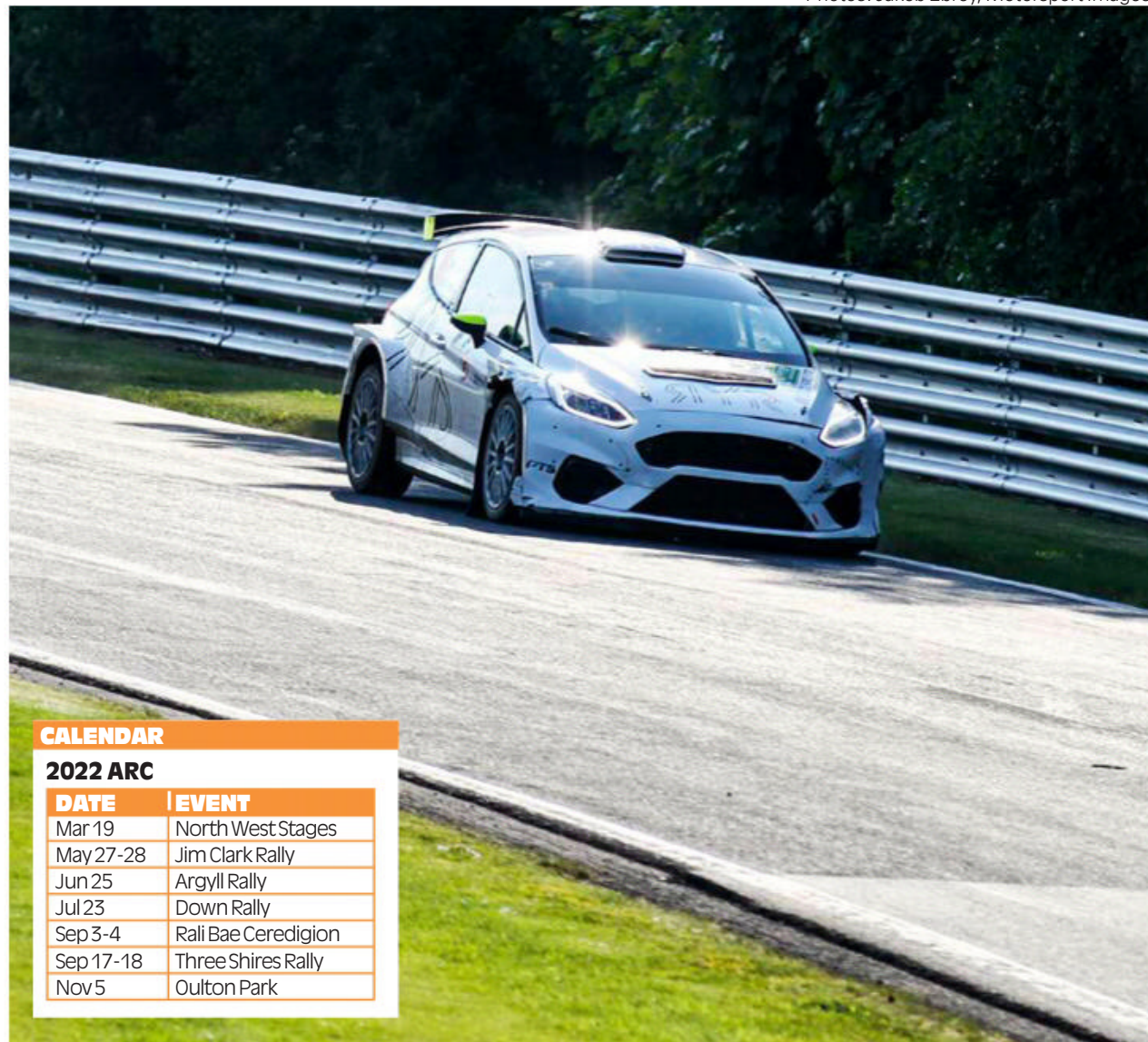


McNulty set for ITRC return



Unique achievement came in 2011, claiming both titles

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Motorsport Images



Fan-friendly experiences of Asphalt rallying have led to calendar changes in '22

ASPHALT SERIES BOSS RESPONDS TO COMPETITORS' CALENDAR CRITICISM

Swapping Isle of Man for Oulton Park sparked social media storm

By Luke Barry

Asphalt Rally Championship coordinator Darren Spann has explained the reasoning behind next year's seven-round calendar after sparking social media fury when the 2022 ARC schedule was announced.

Competitors and fans were incensed by the decision to replace the Isle of Man and traditional events on Epynt and with a single-venue event at Oulton Park.

"The aim of what I want to do with the championship, and with BTRDA and Motorsport UK's full support, is make the championship forward facing to the spectator," Spann explained.

"[To] stop that decline into a minority sport. That's the main driver behind the calendar that it's got to be a spectator-friendly venue and event.

Another driver for change in the calendar is the lingering shadow of Covid-19, with the latest omicron

variant threatening to tighten up social gatherings over the festive period. Not only must Spann take account of the potential for lockdown measures to be reintroduced, but so too must the host venues, not least those involving the UK military.

"The MOD allocation is very, very lucid," Spann confirmed. "There is no real consideration to the sport from the MOD at the moment, so it's volatile at best to be choosing an MOD venue."

For many British competitors, a trip to the Isle of Man is the pinnacle of their season. Classic stages and the heritage of the island's motorsport story make any event there a favourite, but Spann insisted that the decision not to hold a Manx round was based on a combination of cost and previous decision-making.

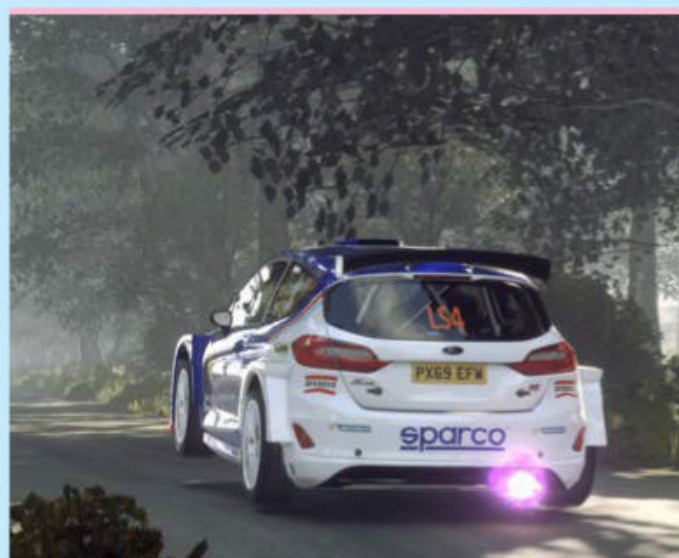
"I'm keen to have a boat trip no more than once in the calendar, because more than once makes it just an elite few people who can compete in the championship

and that's not fair," he said.

"There were some deals I had to accommodate as I came in as championship coordinator, and one of them was the Irish round... I'm not saying I wouldn't have picked it, but it was already in place."

Swapping the fabled Manx roads for a racing circuit was easily the most contentious aspect of the new calendar, although Spann was taken aback by the scale of the rancour.

"I did kind of expect some criticism," Spann confirmed. At the end of the day there's an event there that is more than capable of holding its own in that championship. If people don't like it, they don't have to go there, it's their choice... it's somewhere to take your sponsor, entertain your sponsor and show them what good a show rallying can put on. From the pure rallying perspective, we all wish we were out on 20-30 mile closed-road stages but... those were the best seven events available to me."



Esports star: Jersey eRally was a big draw

JERSEY eRALLY COMES OF AGE

The second iteration of the online Jersey eRally has become a significant event in its own right, says event director Ben Buesnel.

The Jersey eRally first launched last year after the pandemic put paid to live motorsport events. It returned this year on November 26-28 by adopting Rally Germany stages on DIRT Rally 2.0 as online racers took on the likes of triple British Rally champion Matt Edwards.

"From what started as a fill-in for the cancelled Jersey Rally in 2020, the Jersey eRally this year has really stood on its own two feet and is now

an event in its own right, and one event competitors want to come and do," Buesnel told MN.

"I would like to think we have raised the bar this year for online rally events – a lot of hours went into the event to get every detail right, as we wanted the professionalism to be high to show the credibility of Esports and for the Jersey eRally to be taken very seriously."

As well as the rally itself, a charity raffle was held raising money for Teenage Cancer Trust Jersey Appeal and RNLI Jersey.

W SERIES CHAMP CHADWICK RETURNS FOR UK'S XE FINALE

Jamie Chadwick will return to action on UK soil when she contests the Jurassic X Prix, final round of the inaugural Extreme E season, in Dorset on December 18-19.

The 23-year-old, who claimed her second successive championship title in the all-female W Series with Veloce Racing, will rejoin the outfit's sister XE team. Chadwick contested the opening two events of the XE calendar earlier this year, retiring from the series' first event in Saudi Arabia back in April but bouncing back to score a podium finish with second place at the second event in Senegal.

Chadwick will be joined by South African cross country ace Lance Woolridge, the team's reserve

driver so far in 2022, who replaces veteran French all-rounder, Stephane Sarrazin.

Woolridge is a double South African Cross Country Series (SACCS) Class T Production Vehicle title winner in 2018 and 2019, and runner up in the headlining FIA category in 2021.

"Jamie has had an incredible year in W Series and scored our first [XE] podium in Senegal let's not forget," said Veloce team manager, Ian Davies.

"We've been hugely impressed with the work Lance has done for us this year. He's been a huge asset to the team, so we have total confidence in his abilities ahead of Dorset."



W Series champ Chadwick will return to Veloce's XE squad



Tohill named as 5 Nations RX champion after deliberation

TOHILL CROWNED 5 NATIONS BRX CHAMPION

Irishman Derek Tohill has been confirmed as the 2021 British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy champion.

The double European Rallycross Champion finished on the podium in both rounds at the Lydden Hill double-header last month, adding to two victories earlier in the year, to take the standings lead.

With the final round of 5 Nations BRX at Spa cancelled and a dispute over the final results from Lydden Hill concluded, Tohill has been declared the Supercar champion.

"I'm absolutely delighted to be

officially confirmed champion," he said.

"It's a huge privilege to join the list of previous winners in a championship stacked with history. We scored 89 points from 90 in the final three rounds, just the right time to realise the pace and potential we knew we had. We lost this championship in 2019 by only one point, so to win it in only our second attempt is an incredible effort by the whole team."

Tohill will now bid for a fifth Irish Rallycross Championship crown at Mondello Park this Sunday (December 12).



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HISTORICS

DOWN THE PUB

RYAN CHAMPION

Roger Albert Clark Rally winner
Age: 46 Lives: Castleton



Champion: Surprised himself

It was a challenge

"It's been an adventure and we've had everything from blizzards and icy stages to good gravel. It's been a real R.A.C. I guess. What we wanted to do with this car was to play to its strengths and reliability and we thought that with losing some of the mileage it might not work out that way. The car's been perfect. We've just had very minor problems: we lost the fog lights a couple of times but nothing really."

Monday was the turning point

"We went into Walters Arena on Monday morning and it's a stage I know pretty well and I just didn't expect it to be as icy as it was and I spun two junctions in. We lost probably 20 seconds and then we came across Osian Pryce on the next junction and then Paul Barrett near the end of the stage. I couldn't believe it and I lost my concentration and could easily have thrown it off."

He enjoyed Kielder

"Crychan is lovely but obviously with it having patchy ice in a couple of places I didn't fully relax. I really enjoy Kielder, not so much in the snow, but the flowing stages in Pundershaw and Bewshaugh are lovely. The Porsche suits the fast stages."

They set their own pace

"The Porsche feels as good as it did when we started. Thankfully, I know these cars well, so I know what noises they make! You've got to feel a bit for the boys who were fast at the front but it is about finishing. We just did what we'd been doing for last couple of days and played our own game and kept it neat and tidy, not making any mistakes."

The car was strong

"The car was bombproof as they always are, the Tuthill 911 just keeps going. Honestly, it would do the rally again. We didn't know if we would be fast enough, and we couldn't live with the fastest guys. So we just settled at our own pace and kept somewhere near and amazingly it came to us. I'm obviously thrilled to win and it's great to do it in a 911 as that's never been done before. It's a fantastic rally to win. I never knew if I'd get the opportunity to do this rally so to come and win it: I'm a little bit shell shocked. I still can't quite believe it's happened."

BOOSTED UK ROSTER FOR MASTERS CATEGORIES IN RAMPED-UP CALENDAR

Five major meetings for historic competitors throughout the 2022 season

By Paul Lawrence

Masters Historic Racing will have a significantly greater UK element to its calendar in 2022, with Masters races at five major UK historic race meetings.

The change in direction will give Masters Pre '66 Touring Cars and Gentleman Drivers Pre '66 GT series more UK races than ever before, including races at the reworked Oulton Park Gold Cup on July 29-31.

Masters Historic Formula One, Masters Historic Sports Cars and Masters Endurance Legends will continue to feature a pan-European calendar.

"We've tailored the calendar to competitor needs and we've learnt from the roller coaster ride of the last two years which have been affected by Covid and Brexit," said Masters founder Ron Maydon. "Building on these experiences, Masters is helping its teams and drivers race as much as possible in 2022 by partly splitting the five main grids across a larger number of events, in recognition of the fact that travel has been harder for some grids than others."

"A calendar with an increased number of UK dates will support Gentlemen Drivers and Pre '66



Photos: Paul Lawrence

The Pre '66 Touring Car field will be a more familiar sight on UK tracks next season

Touring Car competitors."

Both Pre '66 grids will have races, as well as at the Gold Cup, at the Historic Sports Car Club's Silverstone Trophy in May, Classic Silverstone in late August

and at dedicated Masters events at Donington (April 15-16) and Brands Hatch GP (May 28-29).

Other races confirmed for the new-look Oulton Park Gold Cup include Historic F2, the HSCC

Griffiths Haig Trophy for 50s drum-brake sportscars, HGPCA, the HRDC Jack Sears Trophy, HSCC Guards Trophy, the VSCC and CSCC Special Saloons and Modsports.

BOS THRILLED AS R.A.C. RALLY ARE DREAMS FULFILLED IN ESCORT RUN



Bos recalled his early memories with a run on the five-day event

Regular historic racer Conrad Bos achieved a long-held ambition when he contested the Roger Albert Clark Rally in a Ford Escort Mk2.

Sadly, the Suffolk driver and co-driver Geoff Crabtree were denied a finish when the car refused at start at the final main service on Monday. "My parents rallied an ex-works Triumph 2500 on the 1000 Lakes Rally in the early 1970s," said Bos, who races a Lotus Elan. "We used to skip school to

watch the old RAC and just fell in love with it. We watched the 2019 Roger Albert Clark and decided we had to do it."

His Pinto-engined car was built 10 years ago. He acquired it this year in time for a couple of shakedown rallies. "This is so completely different," he said.

Among his support crew were Lotus Cortina racer Adam Cunningham and MG Midget racer John Moon, who looked after the management support vehicle.

Sturdy stands in at the 11th hour on R.A.C. Rally

Ken Sturdy got a last-minute chance to contest the Roger Albert Clark Rally when his old friend Mike Reed was taken ill two before the rally started.

Sturdy had planned to be part of Reed's support crew for the five-day event but stepped up to drive the Ford Escort Mk2 Pinto when Reed was unwell. "It's a bucket-list event and I can't blame the navigator," said Sturdy of his co-driver, the hugely experienced John Millington. "The first time I drove the car was on the way to scrutineering."

Sturdy brought the car home in a class-winning 22nd overall.



Sturdy was a late stand-in driver

DRURY BACK IN ACTION AFTER THREE DECADES



Adrian Drury had his first forest rally for 30 years when he tackled the Roger Albert Clark Rally in a freshly prepared Talbot Sunbeam 1600Ti. The regular asphalt competitor bought the car three months ago specifically to do the event and it was ready just in time. At the same time, Cat Lund marked her 100th rally as a co-driver alongside Drury as they achieved a finish.

Ex-Gwyndaf Escort turns heads on epic event

The ex-Gwyndaf Evans Ford Escort RS2000 Mk5 returned to competition on the Roger Albert Clark Rally in the hands of new owner Darren Martin.

The 1995 car had not rallied for some time and had been used by its Belgian owner on a few demo events. Martin acquired the 230bhp car this summer and reprepared it for the five-day rally.

"It came complete, but we've rebuilt it," said Martin, more often seen rallying a Mitsubishi Lancer Evo 9. "I used to watch it in period. We think it is the only one of the five [original] cars now active."



Martin evoked Gwyndaf Evans

IN BRIEF

Here come Belgians

Event winners Stefaan Stouf and Joris Erard returned to the UK to tackle the Roger Albert Clark Rally on their first trip to the British forests since the 2019 event. They have spent the last two years rallying a Ford Sierra Sapphire 4x4 in their native Belgium and last week marked only the second event in their Ford Escort Mk1 since the 2019 Roger Albert Clark. They finished 11th overall.

Light Car award

The Vintage Sports-Car Club's Light Car Race, run at Oulton Park in July, has won the best competitive event award in the annual Royal Automobile Club Historic Awards. "Bonkers but brilliant," was how the one-off race for early cars was described. Meanwhile, former racer and BRDC chairman John Grant was given a lifetime achievement award.

Piddens' voyage

Father-and-son Andy and Tom Pidden made the longest trips to compete on the Roger Albert Clark Rally in their Ford Cortina Mk1. Tom is based in Australia while Andy lives and works in Hong Kong. The car, meanwhile, is based in Chichester and was re-prepared after the 2019 event once they were able to confirm travel plans to get to the event.

Higgins has retired

Formula Ford veteran Bob Higgins has confirmed his retirement from racing after more than four decades and has put his 1969 Macon MR7 up for sale. Higgins is best known for his success at Castle Combe where he first won the circuit-based championship in 1981 at the start of a hat-trick of titles. The Brands Hatch Formula Ford Festival in October was his final race meeting.

Escort crew's joy

After a season in the BTRDA 1400 category in their MG ZR, Richard Jordan and James Gratton-Smith switched to a freshly built Ford Escort Mk2 BDG for the Roger Albert Clark Rally. Built to immaculate standards by Vauxhall Nova expert Ian Evans, the Escort was shaken down on the Carlisle Stages and finished then a creditable 17th overall on the five-day R.A.C. Rally.

Williams in Killarney

Welsh Ford Escort Mk2 driver Neil Williams took maximum points when the 2022 Historic Irish Tarmac Championship opened 10 days ago on the Killarney Historic Rally. Williams and co-driver Anthony O'Sullivan took the top score despite Williams feeling unwell on the event. Chief rival Michael McDaid led early on but retired on the Molls Gap stage with engine issues.

R.A.C. REPORT

CHAMPION THE WONDER PORSCHE

Paul Lawrence tracked the R.A.C. Rally battlers through an epic five-day event



Champion was shell shocked by his R.A.C. Rally triumph

After one of the most challenging rallies for decades, Ryan Champion and Craig Thorley won the 2021 Roger Albert Clark Rally after a superbly measured performance in their Porsche 911.

The 14th edition of the rally was every bit as tough as the snow-hit 2010 event as Storm Arwen wreaked havoc across the north of England and Scotland and threatened to derail the event completely. But, after being forced to cancel Saturday's leg in southern Scotland, the rally regrouped for two days in Wales and the action was relentless.

The Ford Escort Mk2s of Jason Pritchard/Phil Clarke, Paul Barrett/Gordon Noble and Osian Pryce/Noel O'Sullivan could all have won but went out in Wales. Instead, Champion became the event's first overall winner in anything but a Ford Escort.

"I can't quite believe it honestly," said Champion at the finish in Carmarthen on

Monday afternoon. "We just did what we've been doing for the last couple of days and just played our own game. I'm a little bit shell shocked. Actually, I still can't quite believe it's happened!"

Pryce flies on Sunday

Despite losing all of Saturday's stages, this was an incredibly challenging event and it was Pritchard who headed out of Sunday's Welshpool restart with just 37s in hand over the charging Barrett, who had been the fastest driver across a long day of more than 100 Kielder stage miles on Friday. Pryce, meanwhile, had struggled a little in Kielder and was almost four minutes down on Pritchard as crews headed south. Champion was a further 40s back as Seb Perez/Gary McElhinney and Adrian Hetherington/Ronan O'Neill rounded out the top six.

The Welsh forests were treacherously icy in places and conditions worsened as darkness arrived. The second run of Dyfi claimed Pritchard who rolled out of the rally. Meanwhile Pryce was flying on home ground and grabbed back 1m34s from Barrett in three stages to slice the lead gap to 1m46s and set himself up for a big attack on Monday. Champion was now third, but over three minutes adrift of Pryce.

A dramatic finale

The final day's action opened with seven miles in Walters Arena and soon after 0900hrs came an incredible five-minute period that stood the rally on its head. Barrett, running first on the road in the main field, rolled over a deceptive brow near the finish and, though damage



Hetherington managed to fight back from an off on Monday for third

was light, a broken track control arm signalled that his rally was over.

In a cruel twist of irony for Barrett, moments earlier his major rival had gone out when Pryce suffered a front stub axle failure mid-stage and his rally was over. Moments later, Hetherington went off early in the icy stage and dropped around 1m50s. Champion, running third on the road, struggled to keep concentration as he saw first Pryce and then Barrett out of the rally. "I just didn't expect it to be as icy as it was and we lost 20s with a spin," said Champion, who instantly took a lead of more than four minutes.

Knowing that Pryce would continue hunting him down on Monday, Barrett had no choice but to push. "I didn't know Osian had stopped and I was just trying to keep him honest," said Barrett. "It was a crest with a sudden six right and we just slid wide and that was it."

It was a poor reward for one of the drives of his life. Pryce took his second bitter rallying blow in little over a week with good grace. He said: "I didn't enjoy the snow, to be honest. But in the back of my mind, I knew if I just got through, I could get to Wales and then do the work there. We started doing the work yesterday. But obviously, we didn't quite finish the job. I think we could have done it."

As the full impact of those few moments in Walters Arena became clear, Champion led the rally to Crychan with a commanding margin and knew that he could ease his pace over the final four stages and duly reached the finish with his four-minute lead intact.

"We didn't know if we would be fast enough and we couldn't live with the fastest guys," said Champion. "So we just settled in our pace and kept somewhere near and amazingly

it's come to us. It's a fantastic rally to win."

Behind the Porsche, Perez was quietly impressive as he worked his way up to second. Clobbering a deer in Kielder was his major concern as it took out his spotlights, but Seb drove with his head to underline his outstanding all-rounder credentials. "A clean, consistent run," reported Perez. "We were a bit off the pace in the ice on Sunday night. On Friday I think it was lucky that the deer hit the lamp pod because it would have done the radiator otherwise. So you need a bit of luck on this event."

Despite his off on the first stage of Monday, Hetherington bounced back to take the final podium place but it was very close as a mighty late charge from Ben Friend and Cliff Simmons narrowed the gap to just six seconds. On a mission, Friend was 22s faster than everyone through the final Crychan stage and slashed Hetherington's advantage from 32s to just six. A cautious approach at the start of the rally ultimately denied Friend a podium place. Hetherington said: "That was some rally we've done. We had to push on Monday to hold him off."

Rhys Yates/Max Freeman and Robert Gough/Jack Bowen delivered fine debut Roger Albert performances to round out the top six, with Yates being impressed by the camaraderie among the leading contenders. Meanwhile, Simon Webster and Jez Rogers were consistently strong on the way to seventh ahead of the remarkable Adam Milner/Roy Jarvis (see sidebar). Paul Street/Ian Jones turned in another great R.A.C. drive for ninth while Sacha Kakad/James Aldridge rounded the overall top 10.



Pritchard rolled out in Wales

Photos: Paul and Ben Lawrence



Barrett had been in a position to win, but slipped off on Monday



British Rally Championship fighter Osian Pryce had stub axle failure

THOSE WHO SHONE AWAY FROM THE SPOTLIGHT

Typically, for such a long and challenging event, there were lots of impressive performances. In overall terms, Seb Perez was a stand-out in a new-build Escort Mk2 from Dansport and the Ford Anglia of Malcolm Rich/Ryland James, just about the oldest car on the rally, thrilled the fans as it claimed the scalps of many newer and more powerful cars.

However, the absolute star of the rally was young Adam Milner, co-driven by the not-quite-so-young Roy Jarvis. In the 1600cc built crossflow-engined Ford Escort Mk1 they have spent the last three years rebuilding, Milner was stunningly fast and spectacular, showing off a prodigious natural talent.

“I’ve not driven it since we crashed on the Pirelli Rally in 2018,” said Milner. “We’ve had a big push to finish it over the last few months. This is a baptism of fire,” he added before Thursday’s opening leg.

The pace was strong from the start and they were 13 seconds outside the overall top 10 as they headed into Wales. The slippery Welsh stages didn’t faze Milner one bit and his uncanny balance, honed on trials bikes, served him well on the icy sections. “We’ve not backed off yet and the car’s going well,” he said in Machynlleth at the end of Sunday.

Through the final day, Milner still didn’t back off and continued to thrill the spectators with his sublime lock-to-lock car control, which finally took them to an incredible eighth overall, only beaten by the winning Porsche 911 and six BDG-engined Escorts. Thirteen BD-powered Escorts followed them home.

“There’s not a mark on it, I’m amazed,” said Milner at the finish. “It’s been mint,” added one of Britain’s most under-rated rallying talents.



Milner was back in harness

WEAVER AND MORTON CLAIM OPEN RALLY

Running alongside the historic event was the Open Rally for all two-wheel-drive cars and after a seesaw rally it was the Super 1600 Opel Corsa of Neil Weaver and Jack Morton that took victory.

Weaver set a scorching pace from the start and took a 26-second lead into the second day as Andy Davison and Tom Murphy chased in their Talbot Sunbeam VXR. However, twice on Friday Davison dropped big chunks of time and then was one of the crews stranded overnight in Langholm. Weaver, running in the first group of cars, had no such problems and led the Open Rally by 17 minutes by Welshpool. Up into second had come the Ford Escort Mk2 of Steve Hopewell and Mike Smith.

In Dyfnant, it nearly all went wrong for Weaver as he was forced to stop with sheared wheel studs and he took two stage maximums as a result. That wasn’t the end of Weaver’s drama as he took another maximum in Walters Arena with a broken driveshaft. However, he then set a stunning pace over the final four stages to reclaim control and win by nearly two minutes as Davison clawed his way back to second from Hopewell.

RESULTS

2021 Roger Albert Clark Rally November 25-29
Starters: 139 Finishers: 100

POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Ryan Champion/Craig Thorley	Porsche 911	4h13m10s
2	Seb Perez/Gary McElhinney	Ford Escort Mk2	+4m04s
3	Adrian Hetherington/Ronan O’Neill	Ford Escort Mk2	+5m20s
4	Ben Friend/Cliffy Simmons	Ford Escort Mk2	+5m26s
5	Rhys Yates/Max Freeman	Ford Escort Mk2	+7m39s
6	Robert Gough/Jack Bowen	Ford Escort Mk2	+9m28s
7	Simon Webster/Jez Rogers	Ford Escort Mk2	+12m16s
8	Adam Milner/Roy Jarvis	Ford Escort Mk1	+14m02s
9	Paul Street/Ian Jones	Ford Escort Mk2	+14m13s
10	Sacha Kakad/James Aldridge	Ford Escort Mk2	+17m14s

Class winners: Steve Higgins/Sam Spencer (Saab 96); Malcolm Rich/Ryland James (Ford Anglia); Martin Linden/Rickard Forsell (Volvo PV544); Rikki Proffitt/Graham Wild (Porsche 911); Steve Graham/Tony Graham (Lancia Fulvia); Milner/Jarvis; Tony Shields/Mark Mason (Ford Escort Mk1); Stefaan Stouf/Joris Erard (Ford Escort Mk1); Keir Beaton/Paul Beaton (Vauxhall Nova); Chris Hellings/Tim Hellings (VW Golf GTi); Ken Sturdy/John Millington (Ford Escort Mk2); Champion/Thorley; Perez/McElhinney; Ricky Evans/Daniel Evans (Peugeot 205GTi); Keith McIvor/David Burns (Ford Escort Mk2); Richard Phillipson/Stefan Arndt (Peugeot 504); Dale Glover/Sean Ward (Vauxhall Nova); Neil Weaver/Jack Morton (Opel Corsa S1600); Steve Hopewell/Mike Smith (Ford Escort Mk2); Andy Davison/Tom Murphy (Talbot Sunbeam VXR).



A late spurt assured victory for Neil Weaver and Jack Morton



Perez brought his Escort home in an excellent second position

FORD ANGLIA CREW TURN HEADS WITH EPIC PERFORMANCE

The clear star of Category 1 for the pre ’68 cars was the Ford Anglia of Malcolm Rich and Ryland James, which needed a gearbox change on its way to 26th overall.

They went back to base in Brecon on Sunday night and worked until 0400hrs changing the gearbox. Aside from the winning Porsche 911, the Anglia was the only other non-Escort in the top 28 cars. Rich marked his birthday on Monday with a truly memorable result.

The wonderful two-stroke Saab 96 of Steve Higgins/Sam Spencer and the Volvo PV544 of Swedes Martin Linden and Rickard Forsell joined the Porsche 911 of Rikki

Proffitt and Graham Wild as other class winners in Category 1.

Adam Milner/Roy Jarvis blitzed the BDA-powered Ford Escorts in Category 2 (up to 1974) and won Class C2 by more than half an hour over the Ian Beveridge/Paul Price Toyota Corolla. The Lancia Fulvia of Steve and Tony Graham successfully completed every stage on its way to Class C1 victory, while Tony Shields and Mark Mason topped Class C3 in their Escort Mk1 Pinto.

The strong Class C5, for the BDA-powered Escort Mk1s, was commandingly taken by 2010 overall winners Stefaan Stouf and Joris Erard from Belgium as they finished

just outside the overall top 10.

In Category 3, for the pre ’81 cars, one of the closest class finishes came among the 1600cc cars in class D2 where the VW Golf of Chris and Tim Hellings beat the Sunbeam Talbot of Dave Hopkins/Richard Wise by just half a minute.

Hopkins and Wise only met at scrutineering after a last-minute deal when Hopkins’ planned co-driver Tony Vart was sidelined by a family bereavement. Hopkins and Wise had run in the top 30 overall until clutch problems slowed them on the final day. In D1, the Vauxhall Nova of Keir and Paul Beaton survived a roll

on its way to winning the class.

When Mike Reed was unwell in the week before the rally, he offered his planned management car driver Ken Sturdy his Escort Mk2 for the event, complete with the talents of John Millington in the co-driver’s seat. Sturdy repaid his friend’s generous offer by bringing the Pinto-engined car home unmarked and winner of Class D3.

Other class winners included father-and-son Ricky and Dan Evans (Peugeot 205GTi), Keith McIvor/David Burns (Escort Mk2) and Richard Phillipson/Stefan Arndt in the magnificent Safari-style Peugeot 504.



Rich and James overcame gearbox problems to win

REPORT

IN BRIEF

Ruck returns

Chris Ruck made a triumphant return to the MNCRC by winning Class B in his old Vauxhall Corsa Kit Car. The reigning category champion missed the opening two rounds of the season. Ruck said: "We might do a few more at Brands Hatch and Anglesey, but it's good to be back with a handbrake next to me." He and co-driver Steve Harris hope to enter more gravel rallies with the car in the new year, but are pushing on with attempts to sell their left-hand-drive Opel Corsa which they have rallied in the series over the last two years.

Cox for Escort

After just three rallies in a new Citroen C2, Rob Cox said he will hand the keys over following the event at Donington Park. "We've sold the car," he said. "So I've spent most of the day thinking 'don't crash it'." Cox finished the opening rally of the season second in Class C at Oulton Park, and has admitted he will be returning to a Ford Escort Mk2 for his remaining appearances – a car he previously rallied in the championship.

Morris ready

Rallycross racer Ollie O'Donovan's co-driver for the event was previous MN Circuit Rally Championship Class B frontrunner Ashleigh Morris, who entered a fourth event of the season in the navigator's seat. Morris, a former circuit racer, hopes to get back behind the wheel in the future. He said: "We should be back in the Scottish Rally Championship next year. I'm hoping to compete in some European rallies as well when possible."

Dimmack for GTs

Ben Dimmack made his second start in the MN Circuit Rally Championship in a Mitsubishi Lancer E9 last weekend, narrowly missing out on a top 10 result that he flirted with throughout. The former Mini Challenge racer has competed in Radicals and sportscar racing recently and confirmed plans for next season. He said: "We've just signed up to compete in GT Cup again". Dimmack raced with Steve Burgess in a Radicals, and admitted his commitments make it "unlikely" he could dovetail it with further rally outings.

BIRD COMES HOME AND RULES THE ROOST

*Frank Bird returned to the MN Circuit Rally Championship with a dominant Donington victory last weekend on the Dukeries Rally. By **Dan Mason***



Bird made up for WRC woe with Dukeries win

The earliest Christmas present delivered this year was to be win number 13 of GT World Challenge racer Frank Bird's still-young rallying career. Victory at Donington Park went some way to make up for his and co-driver Jack Morton's retirement on their WRC debut, Rally Monza, last month.

His Italian detour clashed with the second event of the MNCRC calendar at Cadwell Park which, following Bird's success in round one at Oulton Park's Neil Howard Stages, opened the door for Neil Roskell to take up the mantle as the ex-Formula Renault racer Bird's title threat for the season.

With dropped scores to potentially consider in that particular long game, Bird could only do what he knew best, and came out of the blocks rapidly to deliver a message on his return.

The result was an 18-second swing around the Leicestershire circuit on the first of just six stages in the unmissable red Ford Fiesta R2, Roskell again the nearest competitor in his own Fiesta but not letting that take precedence in his mind. There were more pressing matters on his conscience.

"Barry [Morris] has been doing well lately, so we were thinking title which we're going for now," said Cadwell winner Roskell.

The lead cushion extended to 32s after the second run in Donington Park's opposite direction, Roskell and Bird focused on improving while monitoring another key factor – tyre management – with the former admitting to making the mistake of selecting

a softer compound that suffered graining, costing him vital time on Bird.

The variable of changeable weather also briefly turned on the stroke of noon as rain arrived, creating more tyre choice headaches across the 100-strong field. The leader was not deterred however, opting to put his trust in the wet Michelin compound. It paid off as he added another stage win to extend the cushion up front to just under a minute at the halfway mark.

"We've been on wets all day so far, and I think we'll probably stay on them until the end," reckoned Bird, utilising his circuit racing overtaking knowledge at McLeans in traffic along the way negotiating the similar Fiesta of R2 convert, Robert Swann. "I went for the dive and then thought 'I hope he doesn't turn in here!'"

The gap grew along with the pair's confidence, and after reeling off a fourth stage win in succession, Bird and Morton had pulled over a minute clear of everybody. Roskell was consistently second-quickest all day.

With two stages remaining, a let-up in the damp conditions allowed the pace at the front to grow once again, and Bird settled in for a mistake-free run on the fifth stage to set up a second win of the season, one which he dutifully achieved with victory on the final stage to complete a sweep of six fastest times in six.

The win moves Bird firmly back up into title contention, albeit with question marks still over full season entries, finishing a total of 2m37s clear of his nearest rival Roskell. The winner's verdict was: "[It was] a good day for us, and the car's felt



Cadwell winner Roskell had to give second best to Bird at Donington

really good again."

Attention shifted to Roskell's hold on second spot. As was the case at Cadwell, the Fiesta man was keeping half an eye over his shoulder for the Darrian T90 of 2019-20 champion Barry Morris. The case of déjà vu looked uncanny as Roskell stretched out a lead with early bragging rights in the

morning, but this time the outcome looked to be falling into place more easily throughout the afternoon – unlike in Lincolnshire when the Irishman chipped away at his rival.

An additional threat was that of the Hyundai R5 of experienced rallycross racer Ollie O'Donovan – making a one-off appearance with Ashleigh Morris – closing in

Photos: SMJ Photography



Rallycross racer O'Donovan got P4



Champion Barry Morris missed out on second place by two seconds

CLASSES



Comeback man Ruck took hard-fought win



Hudson's solid start and strong end ensured him Class A win

RUCK MAKES A NOISE ON HIS CIRCUIT RETURN

Making a welcome return to the championship, Class B champion Chris Ruck christened his comeback with a hard-fought victory in the class. Rallying his old Vauxhall Corsa Kit Car rather than the Opel he took the title with last season, Ruck batted off the threat from Fiesta driver Alex Cannon, with series stalwart Paul Sheard third in his Mazda. "I really wanted it to rain," was Ruck's wish after the morning's two stages, and that wish came true moments later as the weather turned. However, conditions favoured Cannon in the afternoon initially, closing a 33-second lead to 19 with two stages remaining.

Ruck responded, two emphatic final stages sealing the deal. Honours in Class C were hotly contested between Matthew Wood and Phillip House, after drama for points leader Josh Payton. Payton was lightning out of the blocks in his Ford Escort, drawing out a gap of 35s in stage one alone before spinning out of SS2 dramatically on slick tyres. The rest then began to find their feet, and House headed the charge and grabbed the lead in the afternoon, taking a dominant victory to significantly trim the points gap to Payton. Stephen Sawley climbed the

order, splitting House and Wood late on. Class A also ebbed and flowed. After a solid start for Jonathan Hudson, a trio of superb times in the final three stages earned the Suzuki Swift driver Hudson a comfortable gap over Matt Walk, which set Hudson up for class success ahead of his Fiesta rival. MNCRC class title contenders James Hardy and Kay Thompson gave chase, Hardy maintaining the points lead thanks to his third spot. Barry Morris took Class D honours, Pete Robinson (Subaru Impreza) claimed E1 spoils and winner Bird clinched E2 in addition to the overall rally victory.

on the pair of them in the afternoon, setting up a potential three-car scrap for the podium. Roskell upped the pace to move within touching distance of the top spot, but drama at the Melbourne Hairpin during a handbrake turn left him limping around the final stage of the day. "Everything was fine and ready for the last stage; we turned into a corner, pulled the handbrake on and the driveshaft suddenly gave up," said Roskell. "Before you know it, I'm doing donuts on the grass at the hairpin! [Co-driver] Andrew told me 'calm down' and we got it home. Only just."

The scare left the car almost undrivable, but a loss of 29s was enough damage limitation to keep his grasp on second spot by a mere two seconds over Morris – crucially maintaining the championship lead before Christmas. Despite the efforts of O'Donovan and battling against a misfire on the fourth run of the day, Morris beat away his fellow Irishman to round out the podium and continue his strong start to the season. He finished 10s clear of O'Donovan by the end.

All three also had to contend with another flying Ford Fiesta of Alistair and Colin Inglis, which sat only five further seconds back. Fifth place would be the reward for the pair's consistency, but they also had the conditions to thank in keeping another of their chasers behind.

Sixth-placed Rob Hughes could well have been among the battle for the podium, but the Ford Fiesta driver lost time on slick tyres when the conditions

began to turn in in favour of more treaded rubber. Stuart Maloney grabbed an impressive seventh in his Skoda Fabia, beating Swann's new Fiesta R2 and the unique Nissan-powered MG Metro 6R4 of Mark Jasper. Paul Murro was one of several drivers to survive an off-track moment in tricky conditions, rounding out the top 10 with a charging effort. Those less fortunate included Darrell Taylor. Fourth in the championship before the visit to Donington Park, his Ford Fiesta R2 suffered electrical gremlins in the morning that proved terminal. Similarly, Tony Robinson's Skoda failed to make it around the opening stage after losing drive.

RESULTS			
Dukeries Rally			
MN Circuit Rally Championship: Round 3 Where: Donington Park When: December 5			
POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Frank Bird/Jack Morton	Ford Fiesta R2	53m55s
2	Neil Roskell/Andrew Roughead	Ford Fiesta R5	+2m37s
3	Barry Morris/Tom Hutchings	Darrian T90 GTR	+2m39s
4	Ollie O'Donovan/Ashleigh Morris	Hyundai R5	+2m49s
5	Alistair Inglis/Colin Inglis	Ford Fiesta R5	+2m54s
6	Rob Hughes/Sion Cunliff	Ford Fiesta R5	+2m58s
7	Stuart Maloney/Kristian Yearwood	Skoda Fabia	+3m18s
8	Robert Swann/Darren Carrod	Ford Fiesta R2	+3m52s
9	Mark Jasper/Don Whyatt	MG Metro 6R4	+4m04s
10	Paul Murro/Callum Cross	Ford Fiesta R5	+4m29s

Class winners: Bird/Morton; Morris/Hutchings; Philip House/Nick Beaumont (Ford Escort Mk2); Chris Ruck/Steve Harris (Vauxhall Corsa Kit Car); Jonathan Hudson/Adi Collins (Suzuki GTi); Pete Robinson/Steve Tugnutt (Subaru Impreza N12); Paul Gorge/Daniel Hurst (Mazda MX-5).



Jasper's unique Metro was in top 10



Payton's points lead is trimmed after spin

FEATURE

THE BRITS ABROAD: TAKING ON EUROPE'S BEST

*In October, a team of British competitors contested the FIA Hillclimb Masters at Braga in Portugal, headed by Alex Summers. **Paul Lawrence** talked to him*



Summers revelled in the Portuguese event



Summers was decorated as the top British runner in Braga special

The FIA Hillclimb Masters event is the discipline's Olympic games as drivers from a range of European countries come together once every two years, though the 2020 edition was delayed for 12 months by Covid.

The end-of-season competition pitted the best of the British drivers against the cream of Europe and regular British runner Alex Summers says it is the biggest thing in hillclimbing.

"It's a collection of the best car and driver combinations of all the European nations. Short of a World championship, it's the biggest thing that we can really do," says Summers, who ended the 2021 British Hillclimb Championship as runner-up to Wallace Menzies after a fine campaign in his Indycar-engined DJ Firestorm.

The UK team of 16 competitors represented a cross-spectrum of regular UK contenders, from top single-seater drivers like Menzies, Summers, Sean Gould and Trevor Willis through 1600cc class single-seater drivers Paul Haines and David Warburton, saloon cars like the Subaru Legacy of Damien Bradley and the Peugeot 205GTi of James Kerr and young Tom Weaver in his Formula Ford Van Diemen.

"We had a full spectrum of cars and talent," says Summers. "We had some huge highlights: Olivia Cooper did brilliantly and so did Dave Warburton and Paul Haines."

Summers led the British contingent at

the very head of the competition and finished fourth overall from 150 European competitors, second in category and headed a clean sweep of the single-seater podium for the UK drivers.

Summers topped his three timed runs with a best climb in 1m03.523s at the fast-and-flowing two-mile hill. Menzies (Gould GR59) and Willis (OMS) chased him home in the single-seater class despite Willis having a brush with the barriers in practice. Warburton and Haines, as committed as ever in their smaller-engined Goulds, made it an all-UK top five among the single-seaters. Cooper took the fastest lady award and Bradley was second in his category.

"It was one of those hills that kept inviting you to try a little bit harder," says Summers. "It was probably my favourite ever experience in a racing car. The Firestorm is a hugely versatile car and is soft and very pliable."

Summers was quick to applaud the pace of the overall winner Italian Christian Merli in his Zytec-powered Osella FA30 sports-prototype, which ended the event

1.5s ahead of the best of the UK single-seaters. "I've watched the videos and he's in a different league in terms of commitment. So was Geoffrey Schatz."

The three cars ahead of Summers in the overall contest were all sports-prototypes and that is a key difference between hillclimbing in the UK and the rest of Europe. "Over here, if someone said they were running a sports-prototype, we'd be like, 'well, what are you playing at?'" But in Europe they don't see single-seaters as a competitive way to go hillclimbing. We compared notes on the car and the set-up with Schatz and everything in his was hard as granite. But I've always thought that softer is probably more forgiving and easier to learn.

"They seem to have a lot of downforce. They've got big flat floors, covered wheels and a huge surface area to make downforce and very low drag. I think that they're less powerful than we are and I think that they're probably quite a lot heavier in many ways. Maybe we're focusing on some of the wrong things and it shows that if someone had a car that was



Damien Bradley's Subaru was part of the UK team in Portugal



Christian Merli topped the times in his Osella



Two-mile track was inviting for drivers

a similar weight to mine with closed bodywork and covered wheels, it could be amazing.”

Summers recognises that the high-downforce prototypes come into their own on the fast corners but given more time on the hill, a British single-seater with less weight and better low-speed handling might just have been the better package. Inevitably, there is a distinct comparison between the nature of the short, sharp UK venues and longer, more flowing European hills.

“For me, the most impressive was Schatz because he’d never been to Braga before and it’s amazing what he did. They are legends and they’ve got massive followings out there.

“Only really at Eschdorf in Luxembourg in 2014 had we ever been truly competitive with the prototypes and that was Scott Moran at the first ever Masters. I think we all came away from Gubbio in 2018 feeling that five seconds wasn’t an acceptable gap and didn’t represent our cars and drivers’ collective ability. In Braga, in keeping with the season we’ve just had we were all over each other and pushing each other and showing the level here in the UK.”

Summers reckons that his maximum speed at Braga was 155mph, not far away from the terminal speeds reached at the faster of the UK venues. With the wings and UK-relevant gearbox that was about as fast as it would go, but Summers admits that there could be still more time to come in the package on a longer, more flowing European hill.

“Left to its own devices, God knows

what it would do if you changed the gearing for it. We just put a longer sixth in, which was the right thing to do in hindsight. Other than Turn 3, I didn’t go below fourth gear so the next time we go we probably want to take a completely different gear set with us. I think familiarity is where the strength is so you don’t have to mess about with the set-up when you get there.

“So we put a longer sixth in and a bigger fuel tank but other than that we didn’t do anything different. That meant although it probably wasn’t the ultimate spec for the car on that day, I went in knowing exactly what I was going to get. It’s quite weird that sometimes you put the car on the lorry and watch it drive away and somehow it’s no longer yours. It’s kind of like breaking up with someone you know and then when you get back together you think: ‘Oh yeah I remember that and it’s not so scary!’

“The biggest thing is low weight and low speed handling, which I think is where we score as you can see that in order to keep those prototypes working they have to take huge cornering speeds. Whereas

you can see with Wallace and my runs we were a bit more fast, slow, fast, slow. It’s just a question of practice and time and if we’d had more runs, I think we would have been ultimately quicker packages.”

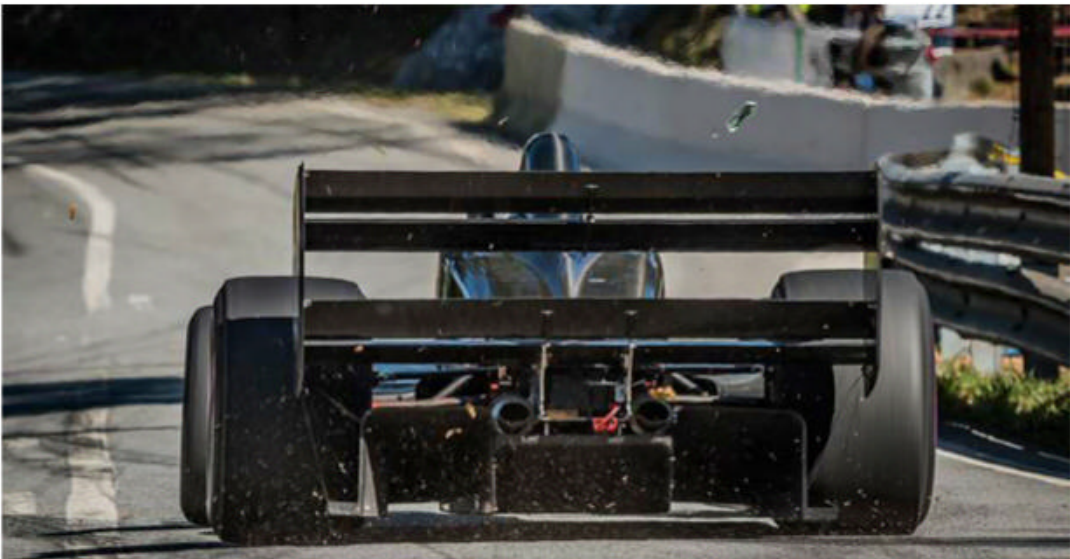
Summers and the entire UK squad were bowled over by the atmosphere and the crowd at Braga, with tens of thousands of fans lining the hill. “There was a massive crowd. They love it out there and they don’t seem to apologise for their passion for motorsport in quite the same way that us Brits do. It’s lovely to go to a country where they are just unapologetically massively into it. So we ran with slightly less silencing them than we would normally and that seemed to go down really well.

“The reaction that we had as a team and individually was fantastic. You could be forgiven for being a bit worried about how it was all going to be after Brexit but on a personal level, everyone was just lovely including people like Geoffrey Schatz. It was good to come away with a decent result. It was nice to be close and being fourth overall was hugely pleasing and being so close at such a different hill and I think we showed what Team UK and what UK hillclimbing is all about.

“I know that if Wallace had another couple of runs and a bit more time to optimise the car that it could have gone either way. It’s been a huge privilege to race with not just Wallace but everyone this season because it’s important to measure yourself against the very best and at the moment he’s that yardstick. When you do beat him you know you’ve done very well.” ■

“The British drivers were all highly competitive”

Alex Summers



The British racer topped 155mph during his run to fourth position

Could the UK host the Hillclimb Masters?

Given the strength and heritage of hillclimbing in the UK, could we host the biennial FIA Masters event?

Summers doesn’t think so. “The challenge facing UK motorsport in general is environmental concerns. And I’m not just talking about carbon dioxide, although it’s obviously a hot topic at the moment.

“I’m more talking about how we treat our neighbours, how we treat the public and how people feel about noise emissions. I don’t think the UK is ready for closed-road hillclimbs like at Braga. There is there isn’t a three-mile stretch of road that no-one would miss.

“Permanent venues like Shelsley Walsh or Doune are not big enough for the volume of people that would come. I would love to see a closed-road hillclimb somewhere in Wales for the British Championship. It’s hard to explain just how big an operation it was and that they shut the centre of Braga for our benefit. We had a full parade and there were probably 30,000 to 40,000 people on the hill. I think it would be unfair because I think Geoffrey Schatz’s car is the width of Shelsley! I’ve driven an F5000 car up Shelsley which is sort of similar size and it’s not a pleasant experience. It’s just too big and too scary.”

Summers has clear views about the future of his chosen branch of the sport and acknowledges that growth is not always a good thing.

“It needs to run in a sustainable way and I’m not really talking about the environment here, I’m talking about trying to protect the best of the sport,” he says. “Trying to protect the atmosphere where I can share the car with my mum and that my dad shares a car with my wife. If we push too hard for the lorries and the sponsorship and the big venues, stuff like that will invariably go.”

He says that for pushing equal opportunities for drivers, sustainability and diversity, then branches of the sport like hillclimbing and sprinting are really the bedrock. “It’s important for someone to have a Vauxhall Corsa with standard bits on it and go and compete.



Alex Summers is a UK regular



Driver wants a stronger future

Watching the under 21s do that at Shelsley and able to do that by probably spending only a couple of hundred pounds was fantastic. I don’t want to see that go. I don’t think anyone goes to Shelsley for a British championship meeting and comes away feeling flat, but it doesn’t need to be a Goodwood or anything like that.

He says: “Every time we come away from the Masters we think: ‘Oh wow, I’ve had 300 friend requests and my video’s gone viral,’ but after all of that you do think actually I quite like a club meeting at Shelsley when I know everyone and I can share the car with my mum. So yeah, it’s great to go and do those things and it’s great to feel like a big deal for five minutes!

“I think the essence is to be the plucky underdog and to go over to Europe and say ‘look, here we are, and this is what we can do,’ and one day we’ll go to the Masters with a with a driver-car combination that will win it.”



British title winner Wallace Menzies enjoyed his end-of-season fun

FEATURE

WARREN HUGHES: MISSING THE F1 CUT BY A WHISKER

Andy Hallbery chatted to one of Britain's most talented racers



Warren Hughes:
a shining talent

Warren Hughes made his return to single-seater racing, and Formula Ford, at last month's Walter Hayes Trophy in a car run by Jonathan Lewis, rekindling a partnership that was championship-winning in 1990.

The Newcastle-born lad's career took him from that early success in only his second season of racing to Vauxhall Lotus, Formula 3 [in Britain, Germany and Japan], the British Touring Car Championship, Italian F3000 and a brief sniff at F1 testing roles, all done in his words with 'Buggerallmoney'.

His career path then moved to GT1 racing and then LMP2 including winning the category's class at the 2005 Le Mans 24 Hours with Tommy Erdos and Mike Newton. The following 10 years were spent in sportscars, his last full season being in British GT in 2014. Since then, he has made a few one-off GT appearances and built a career as a driver coach, including a role in the W Series.

One rumour Hughes does quash here is that he was never asked to sing 'Fog on the Tyne' instead of Gazza...

Question: *How much fun was it getting back into a Formula Ford car for the Walter Hayes Trophy at Silverstone in November?*

Neil Arthurs

Via email

Warren Hughes: "That was mega, really. I was doing it just to have a good time. It certainly wasn't overly serious. But it was yes, just a lot of fun. A huge amount of fun, actually, partly because there wasn't any real pressure. Part of the enjoyment of racing comes from being competitive, you know? It's not just about the physical aspect of driving a car, it's about competition, and doing something quite well.

"So, whenever I'm in a car I'm always sort of going to be in that mindset. I don't mean taking it overly seriously, but you still want to measure yourself. I had Kelvin [Burt] in the other car. Obviously a different car, but in the same category, and obviously I've got quite a history with Kelvin over the years. There has always been that element of trying to measure each other. Then overall you've still got the likes of Rick Morris at something like 73-years-old, who is still super-competitive! He does it every year and is in the car quite often, so it was still quite a challenge to do that event and do a reasonable job.

"It was really enjoyable and especially with the people I did it with. That was part of the reason for doing it too, just to spend some time and rekindle friendships with people like Jonathan Lewis and people like that.

"I said that to Jonathan. I still, to this day, haven't had as much fun in motor racing as the time I spent racing for him in 1990 and 1991. They are still the

Photos: Motorsport Images



absolute golden years of my career in terms of enjoyment and fun. I'm sure that's partly because we were winning regularly, but just the personalities involved. It was just a good fit. Everybody was on the same wavelength.

"Two of my mechanics from that era came to the Walter Hayes just to say hello too. Both later made it to into F1. Paul Bennett and Alastair Gibson [*Ed note: Gibson was lead mechanic at Benetton for four years and then spent 10 years at BAR/Honda F1. He is now famous for his sculptures in recycled F1 carbonfibre parts exhibited around the world*]. It was just nice to have that group of people back together, and a huge amount of reminiscing went on, obviously. Even just going out for a meal with Jonathan every night. You just slip back. It's like time hasn't passed. It's exactly the same people, and you interact in exactly the same way. It was a nice thing to do again."

MN: Was it fun driving a Formula Ford car again?

WH: "They are quite simple to drive. Everything I've done since – other than touring cars – everything had a reasonable amount of downforce, so trying to tune in to something that's just purely mechanical grip, you've definitely got to put a different chip in your brain. But it doesn't take long. A lot of the old feeling and how you used to manipulate the car and the brakes a little bit, stuff like that... It's all still embedded in there, I just needed to dig down a little bit, but it was there and I felt I tuned into it quickly again. I ended up having a couple of really

good races directly with Rick [Morris].

"The nature of Silverstone means it's real slipstreaming, especially in an older car which is less aerodynamic. It's a bit of a brick in a straight line, so you are absolutely desperate for any sort of tow you can get. I had two races where I was slipstreaming with Rick. I knew I needed to do him on the last lap. I didn't want to be leading him on the last lap. I wanted to be behind him.

"I saw the one lap to go board, so I made sure I was close out of Becketts, then I got him around the outside at Brooklands. But it was just that enjoyment of sizing somebody up, thinking about it and just having a little bit of thought and strategy about how you are going to tackle it. It was really enjoyable!

"That aspect isn't something that I'd really encountered in any other categories, using the slipstream effect. It's not something I'd had to think about in anything since."

MN: So, will you do Formula Ford again next year?

WH: "I'd absolutely would love to. I'd like to do it in... well, there's a couple of ideas. I'd really like to do it in a car of my era, so a Van Diemen RF90 or RF91, just because that was the car that I knew and had a lot of success in.

"I'd like to plan it a little in advance as well, and do a bit more of an effort to be competitive and to make sure we've got a really good, strong, engine and stuff like that, do a little testing beforehand.

"As I said earlier, part of the enjoyment of doing it is also to be competitive. And there's more ways you can go about tackling the event. It was great to do it in the way we did it because it was a lot of

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Sonic boom: Hughes began his career in Formula Ford 1600 for Matt Aitken's Sonic Racing operation

FEATURE



Hughes was a multiple race winner in the BTCC for MG

fun, but the competition is still quite strong because there are specialists who are doing it regularly. To be ultimately competitive will need a little more planning. I'd love to do it in that way where we can actually get amongst it all a little more."

Question: *Have you ever laughed in a race car? And I'm guessing when you were team-mates with Jonny Kane and Anthony Reid with MG a laugh wasn't far away...*

Sam Valgren
Via email
WH: "Ha! I did a lot of laughing out of the race car, that's for sure with those two. That was hard to avoid! In a race car? Probably not. I've got a smooth driving style, but I feel quite 'fiery' in a car, so laughing in a car wouldn't be something

that comes naturally. A Geordie term would be I'm a little bit 'raggie', it basically means you've got a mild rage! You try and channel it in a controlled way. I can't remember if I've ever laughed in a race car.
"I've sworn more than a hell of a lot in a race car, and got quite agitated, inwardly, but you need to check your thoughts and get back in the moment. But no laughing! For me it was too high intensity."
MN: We've asked this one a few times too. Have you ever sneezed in a race car?
WH: "No! I've sneezed on the grid, but never while driving. I've never had a wee in a race car either! I think if you get to the stage where you think about having a wee, you need to be relaxed to some degree, and I'm never that relaxed in a race car..."

Question: *You are now mostly a driver*

coach, but did you ever have a driver coach when you were racing?
Simon Crowther
Via email
WH: "No. I've never had a driver coach. I would probably have benefited from one, but it would have had to have been the right person, someone who understood how I think and how to tune in to me, because certainly now, I'm quite clear on what I need as a more experienced driver. I know myself quite well. Back then I probably would have benefited just because I didn't do karting. I came straight into Formula Ford having done a handful of Jim Russell School races, so I was extremely shy of experience. My first year of Formula Ford was a bit wild, there's no doubt about it. But I was very instinctive and learned through a lot of mistakes.
"In some respects, you know, you do

learn without a coach, without that kind of guidance if you can read yourself. You learn how to coach yourself, and you learn to be more self-aware I think. There is some benefit of not having anybody, in terms of understanding who I am as a driver. I'm sure there would have been some far more reaching benefits of having the right coach just to short cut the whole learning process... I had a steep learning curve in the first couple of years of racing!
"Most of my racing experience, funnily enough – and I'm actually quite serious about this – was racing bikes with my brother Mark. [Ed note: Mark Hughes is best known as highly respected Formula 1 writer, better known to long-standing readers of this publication as MPH.]
"Our dad had a pub with a big ballroom. We used to lay the ballroom out with chairs and create a circuit. And Mark, being two years older was always that little bit stronger than me. It was always a real challenge to keep him behind me. We'd do a five or a 10-lap race around this course that we'd laid out, and I had to really think about where to position myself, because he was quite a bit faster than me.
"I know it sounds amusing, but it actually taught me quite a lot about the dynamics of somebody trying to attack you and how to defend! I learned a lot doing that – and we both still have the scars to prove it!"
WH: Have you and Mark ever swapped jobs?
WH: "Oh my God! Mark would be very good at my job, I'm not sure I'd be as

good at his. Don't get me wrong, I can write, I think I'm quite articulate, but his level of understanding of F1 for example is, like, off the scale. His ability to read strategy and to understand – a lot of it comes from experience I suppose, but no. I would be completely out of my depth there doing that job, other than writing a basic report!
"But he's certainly well-equipped to do my job. I'm maybe not the most outgoing person in the overall scheme of things, but probably one of the things that held Mark back is he is quite reserved, even compared to me. In terms of trying to make a career without massive funding behind you, you've obviously got to be able to communicate well and just get on with people. I just think that maybe the whole being more reserved – until you get to know him anyway – his initial approach to people he didn't know probably didn't help him.
"He did the same route as me going to the Jim Russell School and stuff like that in the early days to try and see if he had anything worth pursuing, and certainly he did. He's done a few races over the years in various things and, certainly he has lots of ability. And having sat next to him as a kid in his road car growing up, his car control is out of this world, as he demonstrated to me fairly regularly when I was a 15-year-old kid sitting beside him! It's just as well our parents didn't know too much about that...
"Given the right circumstances he's certainly got the skills to do my side of motor racing."



MG talent: Mark Blundell, Hughes, Anthony Reid and Jonny Kane

"I'm always quite fiery when I am behind the wheel of a race car"
Warren Hughes



MG Sport and Racing MG ZS was a BTCC frontrunner

Question: You tested Formula 1 cars a couple of times, but did you ever get close to a deal?

Becs Wallace
Via email

WH: “I tested for Lotus in 1994, because Peter Collins, who was running the team at the time, thought I had a lot of potential. That was the first time that I felt I had a direct link into F1 where it actually could materialise into something through Peter’s support, and obviously I was aware of everything he’d done for Johnny Herbert. I remember getting really super-excited about the potential that that relationship had.

“It’s all about timing isn’t it? I caught Lotus and Peter Collins, just at the point of the team collapsing and going bankrupt at the end of 1994. So that little glimmer of light that I thought might have the impetus to get my foot in the door went very quickly. That was disappointing.

“The second chance I got was when I was doing the Italian F3000 series with Arden Team Russia and I won a couple of races on the trot mid-season. And Jonathan Williams rang, Frank’s son, it was their first year of the BMW engine tie up, so 2000, and he said that neither Ralf Schumacher nor Jenson were available to do a test that they needed to do. It was just an airfield test initially, but it was doing some really interesting differential work, and it was all at the time very secretive.

“Things went well, and they invited me back for another test at Valencia.

That was going to be a full-blown test with other F1 teams there. But I had a Formula 3000 race at Enna on the Sunday, and I couldn’t leave that evening without having some access to a private flight. I asked Christian Horner if I could skip the race because I had the potential of an F1 test. He just said, ‘Not a chance. No way. You are contracted to do it and you are in with a shout of the championship’. He had sponsors to keep happy, and stuff like that, so he wouldn’t let me do it.

“Williams at the time said, ‘look, don’t worry, we’ll rearrange it for another time. That ‘other time’ never came. That was just a ‘sliding doors moment’ that I missed. That level of opportunity never cropped up again.

“However, by that stage in my career it was always going to be a long shot. I was already the wrong side of 30, and it was always going to be my last ever glimmer of hope to be able to have any glimmer of hope to have anything to do in F1. But at the time a test drive role was very much a thing then, and older drivers then weren’t uncommon. Obviously you’d had people like Damon who’d been part of Williams. He was certainly one of the more experienced drivers by the time he even got to Williams, so it wasn’t unheard of. I wasn’t crazily old, but it was just a little bit of a long shot and really to make anything happen beyond what I did was going to need me to bring significant money. It turned out they got Bruno Junqueira for that test, and he was bringing Petrobras money, and he

became the full-time tester beyond that.

“With that knowledge and hindsight, it was always going to be a long shot anyway. The first opportunity with Lotus and Peter Collins... That was the thing that I thought was going to be my route in. Beyond those, nothing came after that really. It was nice to have a couple of bits of interest but it just needed to be at a slightly different time.”

MN sets the scene. In Motorsport News, October 28 issue, Kelvin Burt was asked if it was true that he and Warren lied about their age and couldn’t enter the McLaren Autosport Young Driver Award in 1990. Kelvin’s answer was: “It’s almost right! The first award was just given to David Coulthard without any shootout or shortlisted drivers. By the time it got round to the next year I was too old. Warren was too old, but I was under consideration because they hadn’t looked at my age properly. So Warren grassed me up to the judges because he couldn’t get in himself... thanks mate.”

So, in the interests of fairness, and a right to reply MN read Kelvin’s answer for Warren...

WH: “Haha.... That’s completely untrue! That’s something lost in his memories I think... What did happen – and I don’t think Kelvin was under consideration in 1990 – I was under consideration on the back of my Formula Ford championships, but technically I was six weeks too old... but I was lying about my age. I’d knocked two years off my age from day one, so in 1990 I was already 23, but they presumed I was 21.



Commitments in Italian F3000 scuppered an F1 test for the Geordie

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FEATURE



The RML-run MG in 2005 ironed out some of the earlier flaws in the car



Warren Hughes and MG team-mate Jonny Kane at Le Mans in 2002

“But it came and bit me because obviously you needed proof of your age. I didn’t say ‘I’m not too old’, I just said, yeah, ‘I’ll get you proof’, and I spent the next few weeks trying to get some bloody forged passport or documents. My dad knew one or two dodgy people around Newcastle at the time! I was trying desperately at the time to show that... But I ended up not being able to do it and I had to come clean.

“I think somebody from the magazine rang home one day, and my mum answered the phone, and they asked her ‘what’s Warren’s date of birth?’ And naively and innocently she told them the truth! I had nowhere to go after that. But I absolutely did not grass Kelvin up! I think the whole world and his granny knew Kelvin had been lying about his age from quite early on...”

Question: If you had a choice would it be single-seaters, touring cars, GT or Le Mans?
Scott Weston
Via email
WH: “The most pleasure you get from driving is always going to be from single-seaters, because the cars are purely designed for purpose, racing and nothing else, especially when you get to a good downforce car like a Formula 3 car. Nothing will ever better a Formula 3 car of that era. If you hop in a Formula car now, like the Dallara with that same F3 concept of mega high grip and fairly limited power... That’s possibly the best car you will ever drive in your whole career, in terms of it does exactly what you want it to do. You get so tuned in to it, and it’s so sensitive to your inputs and to your set-up.

“So, I would always choose that, but going the single-seater route also, in addition, makes you a much better

driver because of the reasons I’ve just said. The importance of your inputs, because the car is so sensitive, it develops your driving to the right level, and that carries you into whatever you are going to do, touring cars, GT, LMP, whatever. It’s the best schooling without a shadow of a doubt. Even if somebody ultimately had the ambition to be a top GT driver, I would always say start off with a single-seater programme, because it will develop you into a better driver.

“If you are quick in a Formula 3 car, you will be quick in anything, and I do think we’ve lost sight of that now in the structure of the ladder to F1 now. FIA Formula 3 isn’t that concept anymore. You’ve got this very heavy car with a high degradation tyre. There’s no open testing, and the drivers get very, very limited track time. I just think that at that F3 level, the drivers are still developing. They need seat time; they need to be out testing. They just need to be fast, first and foremost, and not worrying about tyre degradation. I feel we’ve lost that critical development point; we’ve lost the best category.

“Probably the closest thing to that is Euroformula Open but that’s not fashionable and it’s not endorsed by the FIA, so you don’t get superlicence points, so it’s not an obvious ‘go to’ formula. But it is the best car at that level by a long way, and it teaches you all the right things.

“I’m a little bit sad that that structure, that the importance of F3 as it was isn’t there anymore.

“That single-seater grounding, that schooling... If you can get on top of that you will be good at whatever you do. You are set for anything after that.”

Question: What’s the best car you’ve

ever driven, raced or tested?
Syd Millen
Via email
WH: “That would probably be the MG Lola LMP675 that I did my first Le Mans in, in 2001. Basically, Lola saw the potential of that category of car to compete outright for overall honours. It could compete against LMP900s if they got the maximum from the regulations in terms of getting the car on weight limit, and a certain amount of power from the engine, the right amount of drag at Le Mans, it could overall be competitive. They were the first ones to really build a car specifically to those regs.

“It was magic, it just didn’t have enough development. It probably had 10% of the development that it needed. It was fragile and not reliable. It got better in the time that we had it. In the second year we went to Le Mans and managed to run until about 00:30hrs at night and managed to split the three works Audis with me, Jonny and Anthony, so we felt we were punching way above our weight – which we were really. It was quite a small team and it

“We could have pulled off a shock at Le Mans with MG”

Warren Hughes



Winning LMP2 at Le Mans in 2005 was a career highlight

had a fraction of the development on it.

“It was a great concept of a car; really lightweight, had good downforce. But it didn’t have power steering and stuff like that. It could have been refined and been a much better car, but it was good for Le Mans – it just needed to be reliable, and we never quite got there. It was awesome to drive, almost like a big F3 car in how you drove it which was obviously right up my street, with lots of downforce. The reward was tremendous.

“That’s probably the standout car. I’ve driven quite a lot of variations of that type of car over the years but that was the car that stood out.”

Question: How close were you to Stock, [former Formula Ford team-mate Matt] Aitken and Waterman and recording Fog on the Tyne instead of Gazza?

Matt James
Motorsport News
WH: “Hahahahaha! That’s funny! Somebody dreamt that concept up, but there’s absolutely zero truth in that. I was quite good friends with Matt Aitken at the time in 1989 [Ed note: Aitken ran Sonic Racing and drove the team’s other FF1600 car]. As a little joke he put a Harry Enfield character’s ‘Loadsamoney’ sticker on his car, so I asked if I could have a sticker for my car with ‘Buggerallmoney’! So we both had those stickers on our cars.

“I had a nice relationship with Matt. He gave me my first break beyond John Kirkpatrick at the Jim Russell School. Without Matt giving me the opportunity to go racing at national level somebody else might have come along. But Matt took the plunge and gave me that first break. That got me running and got me attention from other teams too.

“I’ve got a lot to thank him for. Unfortunately, because I switched teams to Jonathan Lewis the following year, Matt got quite upset that I had because obviously he’d given me my early chance. Ultimately I had to do what I felt was right for my career, and I felt Jonathan at the time had a much stronger team and would help me develop as a driver. I needed all the help I could get as I was so inexperienced. So, I took plunge and went to Jonathan, and unfortunately to this day Matt has never spoken to me again, which makes me a little bit sad.

“With hindsight I didn’t feel I did anything underhand with him, I was always completely open and honest. When he first offered me a seat for 1990 it was on the basis that I needed to bring a little bit of money, and I had no money at all. I couldn’t bring any money. I literally was ‘Buggerallmoney’.

“Jonathan at the time had something for the team, and he had probably four cars and could cobble together a budget to run an additional car from. Jonathan wasn’t asking me for any money, and it was quite clearly the best team. So being ‘cold’ about it, it was a no-brainer, but I still felt a little bit guilty as Matt had given me my break. But my head had to overrule everything at that point because it was clearly going to be better for my career.

“I just feel sad that even with all the time that’s passed that he can’t sort of see my reasoning for making that decision. Maybe he can, and it’s just our paths haven’t crossed again to have that conversation. It’s not a big drama or anything, it’s just a little bit sad that I do acknowledge how important he was to get my career underway. I just don’t like having no relationship at all. It’s not who I am, but I guess it’s part of life.

“But there was absolutely no hint of truth in that Fog on the Tyne rumour!” ■

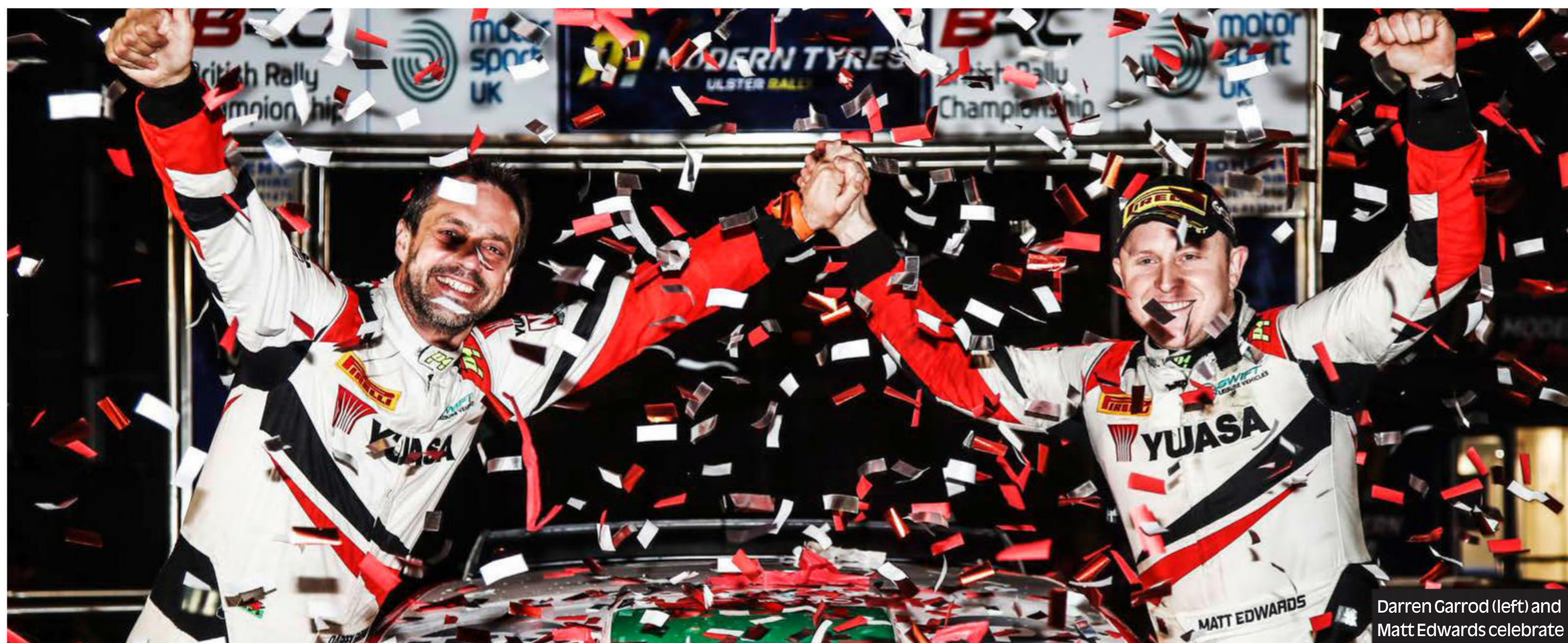


Sharing with Brendon Hartley and Jody Firth in 2012



Hughes returned to FF1600 at the Walter Hayes Trophy

FEATURE



Darren Garrod (left) and Matt Edwards celebrate

HISTORY MAKER: MATT EDWARDS ON HIS THIRD BRC TITLE

*Nobody had ever won three British Rally Championship titles in a row until VW Polo man Edwards did this year. He speaks to **Luke Barry** about his toughest season to date*



Champion withstood the pressure on Ulster climax

Matt Edwards brought his Volkswagen Polo GTI R5 to a stop, undid the belts and clambered out of the car. He'd done it. History had been made. Nobody had won three British Rally Championships on the spin before. Edwards had set about changing that.

Out the car, he rested his head against the open door. The media swarm arrived, but still he didn't know what to do; what to say. He closed his eyes, allowing the moment to consume him. It looked like Edwards didn't know what had just hit him.

"Yeah, basically, I didn't really know what to say," he tells Motorsport News. "It was a big relief because it was two years in the making, we did the Cambrian in 2020 and thought 'the third's on' and then all of a sudden there was nothing for a long time, it was quite hard to go through

that period of not knowing what would happen next. I turned left and saw the yellow board, saw the red board and when all that was over, it was quite an overpowering feeling. I've watched the footage back and I look quite subdued in a way, but I just didn't know what to say, it was weird."

The pressure on both Edwards and title rival Osian Pryce on the final round in Ulster was relentless. The way the points situation played out with the best five scores from seven rounds to count, it was effectively a winner-takes-all finale. Edwards led Pryce by 9.1 seconds before Pryce was caught out and crashed on the penultimate stage of the season – highlighting just how fine the margins were.

"That did make it worse in a lot of ways," Edwards says of Pryce's accident. "Immediately when I went into the last stage I didn't run the same lag strategy, I kept the launch rpm right down so it wasn't putting as much strain on the car, every time we were flat out on the straights

ROUND BY ROUND

ROUND 1 Neil Howard Stages, May 31

Winner: Sam Moffett

Round-up: A unique round to restart UK rallying shook up the formbook. Rhys Yates and BRC debutant Frank Bird were early frontrunners before Bird spun from the lead and was then excluded from third with an underweight car. Yates remained in contention, but Sam Moffett ultimately pipped him by just a single second – securing his first BRC podium – with Osian Pryce third. Matt Edwards was docked 10s for speeding in the pitlane after the flying finish, otherwise he'd have completed the rostrum.



Sam Moffett was a surprise winner after the Oulton Park opener

ROUND 2 Nicky Crist Stages, July 10

Winner: Matt Edwards

Round-up: In a nostalgic tussle, Edwards took on Tom Cave who made his one and only appearance of the season in a Ford Fiesta Rally2. In the end just 5s split the pair as Edwards recorded his first BRC victory in a Volkswagen. The local Welsh drivers were dominant as Pryce was third, just 12s shy of the win. Rhys Yates was fourth but close to a minute down, albeit ahead of championship returnee Matthew Wilson. Ollie Mellors crashed spectacularly on SS1 but escaped serious injury.



Matt Edwards got his campaign rolling with a win in Wales



Edwards enjoyed a battle with Tom Cave on the Nicky Grist Stages



Pryce pushed hard with a brace of wins in the latter part of the year

I backed off the throttle so I wasn't hitting the limiter. Everything was in safe mode if you like which makes it harder to drive – that was definitely the hardest stage, the hardest mental bit of the day. A couple of times in the stage I actually thought 'I've actually got to push on a bit now' to get a bit of heat back in the tyres to not wake myself up but just stay alert to what's going on."

The season wasn't all about Edwards vs Pryce though – at least not initially. Sam

'Edwards just didn't know what to say'

Moffett won the unorthodox opener at Oulton Park with Pryce third and Edwards off the podium, but once onto the gravel and the Nicky Grist Stages, the reigning champion was soon off the mark – fighting against his old foe from 2019, Tom Cave.

"That was probably one of the highlights of the year because again I can't quite stress the importance of the gap between the Cambrian [2020] and that rally," says Edwards. "Nicky Grist was first proper rally in my book so to win that first proper rally out was big and again with Tom being the fly in the ointment there, that was good. It was good that with the depth of the entry, it was the same two at the top that had been previously when the depth of the entry was criticised. 'There's nobody there, it's just Matt and Tom. Oh look, it's 15 of them there now and it's still Matt and Tom.' That was nice, for both of us. We both probably agree with that, it kind of validated the 2019 season again and that was a good win – probably one of my better gravel wins because we didn't



Yates was in the heart of the fight early on in 2021

quite have the car perfect how I wanted it, it was a bit of a battle with handling. It wasn't bad by any means, but I was having to drive a little bit differently to how I would like to just to get the times. So that was good and to have done it again after so long out the car was very rewarding."

By winning, Edwards had taken the championship lead... but the smiles were short-lived. Running first on the road on the Grampian meant Edwards was "in a bit of bother" as M-Sport's Matthew Wilson stole an early march, leading by eight seconds after four of six stages so not out of reach. But Edwards was served a bout of déjà vu as an engine problem that had briefly affected his Nicky Grist Stages returned in Scotland, only this time more terminally.

"We had one hiccup of it in the middle of stage three which we were fastest in, and then it did it a couple of times on the road section back to service and we changed various things in service. Obviously you can fiddle around with the car in service as much as you want but you don't have the



Edwards had to battle some mechanical woe through the year



Matt Wilson left the others in his dust on the Grampian Stages Rally

ROUND 3
Grampian Forest Stages, August 14
Winner: Matthew Wilson
Round-up: M-Sport's Wilson shocked everyone by going fastest on the opening stage and checked out from there, beating Pryce to victory by 20s. Edwards had looked to be a threat and was closing the gap before his Polo's engine cried enough before the penultimate stage. Yates got the better of fellow Ford Fiesta Rally2 driver Keith Cronin by just one second in a final stage shootout for third. That result was enough to propel him into the championship lead.



A strong opening flourish helped Matt Edwards to victory

ROUND 4
Trackrod Rally Yorkshire, September 24-25
Winner: Matt Edwards
Round-up: Edwards blitzed everyone on Friday evening's stage and won four of the following day's five stages to notch up victory number two of the season. The real battle was for second between Pryce and Wilson, settled in Pryce's favour by a mere 0.8s as Wilson overshot a junction on the final stage. It was a difficult rally for several others though. Yates punctured twice to finish eighth and wouldn't return for the rest of the season. Pryce took over the championship lead.

FEATURE



Multiple champion Keith Cronin made a full-time return and bagged sixth spot in the final points table

opportunity to try something and then go and drive it. So on the road section out of service we’d driven half a mile down the road and it coughed again, went to the regroup, coughed again. It just got worse and worse and worse and worse.

“We changed plugs and coils two or three times on the way out to that stage to try and rectify it and it cleared for a mile and then was back where it was, and we struggled to just get out the stage. And at that point it was getting that hot with the unburnt fuel and the exhaust the inside of the car was smoking, Darren’s seat was singed, the heat in there was horrific and there was a fire risk and an engine blow-up risk and we weren’t getting round fast enough to get many points anyway. It was a decision to park it up really. But that was disappointing, and again with a poor first round, it was looking like an uphill struggle.”

The Grampian would prove to be one of three disappointing rallies among the next four, although the Trackrod was the clear exception. Edwards was sensational, dominating the first stage in Dalby in the dark to carve open a 17s lead over his rivals. “That was always the plan! It was a stage where I thought just a residual knowledge and memory of the stages [would help]. I think you can just get accustomed to conditions if that makes sense, and a lot of people in that stage in the dark would’ve found it very daunting because I remember it was for me when I first did it.

“So you’re looking down these really long rigs and your lights don’t pick up the

end of them, and that gives you a sense of doubt. But when you know that you’re going to see something at the end of them before you need to slow down rather than it just come out the blue on you, I think you just relax a little bit and I think you drive a little bit better with that residual knowledge and an overall comfort in that situation. And that stage to me, it felt fast enough but just very uneventful.

“Again, being comfortable at that speed and not having any moments generated a really good time that effectively won us the rally.”

Pryce hoovered up his fourth podium from four, just 0.8s ahead of Wilson, to lead the championship, but Edwards was in the ascendancy. And his blistering pace on Mull certainly proved he likely would have been on top there too, but an error less than a mile into the 148-mile event ruined his event. It was an impressive recovery to fight back past the Juniors and Pryce on the island in top cars, but it was an uncharacteristic mistake that Edwards describes as “a huge lapse in concentration”.

“The off certainly focused everything very quickly on what needed to be done,” he chuckles. “I think all in all we probably got more out of that event the way it unfolded than had we just won it. I think it showed me a variety of strengths that I still had; the motivation and the drive to do it was obviously still there and to drive the remaining stages after that the way I had to was rewarding for me.”

It was anticipated that Edwards would bounce back on his home event, the Cambrian, but his Polo was thrown awkwardly over a compression and collided with a bank. At the time he was chasing a small deficit to Pryce, but the end result was Edwards was again forced to be an exceptional mechanic and nurse his car to the finish. The fact he even had a shot at the title in Ulster proved his dogged determination.

“In Mull there was obviously still the Cambrian which, at the time, I felt I had it in my back pocket as a bit of a back stop, the Cambrian would maybe rescue a bit of

the situation. But Ulster there was no back stop, there was no second chance, that day was the one that counted,” Edwards says. “There was nothing left on the line in Ulster, it was all in. All or nothing. The car was skating around at silly speeds a fair percentage of the day which, given the car how responds and how it feels, felt OK but you just knew that underneath you, you were on a knife-edge of grip.

“I don’t think there was any way, the pace we started. . . I remember thinking in the regroup ‘one of us is ending in the hedge here.’ There was no real way anybody was going to take enough time easily without something happening, because we were both having moments as it was. When I really needed to, it was nice to be able to produce what’s needed.”

Edwards wasn’t sure if a third title would feel as good as the first, but he believes it’s “actually more satisfying because of the adversity”. He explains: “Everything feels more valuable as it happens, the sensation is diluted as time goes by from your first to your second but the relief and how speechless I was at the end of Saturday, I think it does feel more special with the accolade of the third in a row that hasn’t done before.”

The fact he’s managed to achieve something great like Jimmy McRae, Roger Clark and Mark Higgins never managed still doesn’t make sense to Edwards. “I still look up to all those guys. I don’t perceive in myself that I’m on that level,” he says. “It would be nice to think that it’s a highly regarded success, but it’s hard to put it into perspective because I can’t look at it from other people’s point-of-view. But what you can definitely say is we’re going down those roads faster than anybody else ever has done. And that’s not me being big headed, we have the machinery and the tyres to do it.”

The package still needs an expert driver to extract the maximum out of it, though. And for the past three years, there has been no better expert than Matt Edwards. Even with his back against the wall, there was no denying him a place in history that means more than most could imagine. ■



Champion Matt Edwards was in the spotlight all season long



M-Sport development driver Matt Wilson was a star attraction

BRITISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP 2021 (best five scores to count)											
POS	DRIVER	CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL	
1	Matt Edwards	Volkswagen Polo GTI R5	12	25	0	25	18	18J	25	111	
2	Osian Pryce	Volkswagen Polo GTI R5	15	15	18	18	30J	25	0	106	
3	Matthew Wilson	Ford Fiesta Rally2	-	10	25	18J	-	0	-	53	
4	Rhys Yates	Ford Fiesta Rally2	22J	12	15	4	-	-	-	53	
5	Sam Moffett	Ford Fiesta Rally2/R5	25	6	6	-	-	-	14J	51	
6	Keith Cronin	Ford Fiesta Rally2	-	4	12	6	-	10	18J	50	
7	Seb Perez	Ford Fiesta Rally2	9J	1	0	8	-	18	10	46	
8	Josh Moffett	Hyundai i20 R5	6	8	10	-	-	-	18	42	
9	William Creighton	Ford Fiesta Rally4	0	0J	-	2	15	12	6	35	
10	Eamonn Kelly	Ford Fiesta Rally4	0	0	0	1	10	0	9J	20	
11 Tom Cave (Ford Fiesta Rally2) 18; 12 Ollie Mellors (Proton Iriz R5) 16; 13 James Wilson (Hyundai i20 R5) 15; 14 Finlay Retson (Ford Fiesta Rally4) 12; 15 Cathan McCourt (Ford Fiesta Rally2) 12; 16 Johnnie Mulholland (Ford Fiesta R2T) 12; 17 Desi Henry (Hyundai i20 R5) 10; 18 Kyle White (Peugeot 208 R2) 8; 19 Ashley Dickson (Ford Fiesta R5) 8; 20 Brendan Cumiskey (Volkswagen Polo GTI R5/Ford Fiesta Rally4) 6; 21 Rupert Flynn (Ford Fiesta Rally4) 4; 22 Garry Jennings (Ford Fiesta R5) 4; 23 Joseph Kelly (Ford Fiesta R2T) 24; Joe McGonigle (Ford Fiesta Rally2) 2; 25 Tom Williams (Skoda Fabia R5) 1; 26 Aoife Raftery (Ford Fiesta R2) 1 BRC Teams' championship: 1 Melvyn Evans Motorsport 193; 2 M-Sport 136; 3 Dickson Brothers Motorsport 84 Junior BRC: 1 Creighton 118; 2 E Kelly 103; 3 Retson 68; 4 Mulholland 55; 5 White 45; 6 Brian Brady (Ford Fiesta Rally4) 35; 7 J Kelly 35; 8 Jason Dickson (Ford Fiesta R2T/Rally4) 33; 9 Ruairi Bell (Ford Fiesta Rally4) 31; 10 David Kelly (Ford Fiesta Rally4) 28; 11 Eddie Lewis (Ford Fiesta Rally4) 26; 12 Flynn 18; 13 Raftery 12; 14 Fraser Anderson (Ford Fiesta R2T) 6; 15 James Boland (Ford Fiesta Rally4) 5; 16 Casey Jay Coleman (Ford Fiesta Rally4) 2 BRC National Rally: 1 Garry Pearson (Skoda Fabia R5/Mitsubishi E9) 110; 2 Stephen Petch (Ford Fiesta WRC) 94; 3 Jason Black (Toyota Starlet) 72; 4 Alan Carmichael (Hyundai i20 R5) 66; 5 Jennings 48; 6 Elliot Payne (Ford Fiesta R5) 40; 7 Charles Payne (Ford Fiesta WRC) 28; 8 John Morrison (Ford Fiesta R5) 28; 9 Thomas Preston (Ford Fiesta WRC/R5) 25; 10 Stuart McLaren (Opel Kadett GT/E) 21; 11 J Wilson 18; 12 Chris McCurk (Ford Fiesta R5) 13; 13 Niall Henry (Ford Fiesta R5) 10; 14 A Dickson 8; 15 Alistair Inglis (Ford Fiesta R5) 6; 16 Allan Smith (Honda Civic Type R) 6; 17 Donnie MacDonald (Mitsubishi Lancer E9) 4. J = points joker played.											

ROUND BY ROUND



Pryce took advantage on Mull Rally

ROUND 5
Mull Rally, October 8-10
Winner: Osian Pryce
Round-up: Only Melvyn Evans Motorsport drivers Edwards and Pryce made the trip to Mull in the BRC1 class, and the rally was over almost as soon as it begun. Edwards hurtled into a bank and damaged his car, leaving Pryce clear to manage his pace and grab a first BRC win in seven years at a crucial time. Edwards’ pace was awesome to recover to second, overhauling the Junior BRC drivers to do so. JBRC winner – and eventual champion – William Creighton finished third.



Second win in a row aided VW man’s bid

ROUND 6
Cambrian Rally, October 30
Winner: Osian Pryce
Round-up: Pryce meant business, opening up a 10.4s lead on SS1. Edwards closed to 6.2s behind and a big battle was in prospect until Edwards was thrown into a bank, carrying out running repairs to get to the end. Pryce won the rally – and nearly the title – but third was enough to keep Edwards in the race. But only just. Both drivers would need to win Ulster, but Pryce would win if either didn’t. Seb Perez scored his best result of the season with second.

ROUND 7
Ulster Rally, November 20
Winner: Matt Edwards
Round-up: The epic finale. Pryce got ahead on SS1 but Edwards soon nosed in front only to be overhauled again. Edwards dropped 10s to Pryce on SS5 but he believes it and SS6 “won us the rally” as he backed off on SS5 when the tyre didn’t suit and pushed on SS6 when it did to restore his lead. Ultimately Pryce was caught out at a square-right on SS8 and rolled down the hedge into a field, leaving Edwards clear to win the rally and the championship.



Edwards held his nerve for victory in the final

FEATURE

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

THE TOP 10 BRC DRIVERS OF 2021

Who's been the most impressive across the latest British Rally Championship season? **Luke Barry** has his say on the year just gone

The class of 2021 in the British Rally Championship was deeply impressive, right across the classes. Since the series' relaunch in 2016, there's never been such an impressive line-up – in the words of Rhys Yates earlier in the season: "Who's missing?"

Picking a top 10 from such an esteemed field is therefore hard, particularly with few competitors seeing out the whole season, but we've attempted to do just that. Some big names do miss out – round one winner Sam Moffett for example, his brother Josh and four-time champion Keith Cronin – but just as the action on the stages was, securing a spot in this ranking was competitive.

This, of course, isn't necessarily about who was the most successful, but who had the most impressive season relative to their pre-season expectations. It's with this context that you can understand why the likes of Cronin miss out as although his year of development for Hankook may have been a handicap, his previous exploits were far superior than what he managed in 2021.

Do you agree with the choice? Let us know at motorsportnewsed@kelsey.co.uk.

1 MATT EDWARDS

Co-driver: Darren Garrod
Car: Volkswagen Polo GTI R5
Wins: 3 **Other podiums:** 2 **Stage wins:** 35
Championship position: 1st, 111 points
It had to be, didn't it? Although the quickest throughout the year, Edwards has never had to work harder for a title than in 2021 – thanks to the superb pace of his team-mate, some mechanical drama and his own driving errors. But when it mattered, he delivered. Most other drivers would have given up in Mull and on the Cambrian, but Edwards battled on and was rewarded with a record-breaking third title.



2 OSIAN PRYCE

Co-driver: Noel O'Sullivan
Car: Volkswagen Polo GTI R5
Wins: 2 **Other podiums:** 4 **Stage wins:** 12
Championship position: 2nd, 106 points
Would have been first had he won the title, and arguably the title should have been his. Had just one score been dropped instead of two (as has been the case in other seasons), he would've won. Pryce's consistency may have been annulled but it was still admirable in 2021, and he turned it on when it mattered with two back-to-back victories to force Edwards to really earn this one.



3 EAMONN KELLY

Co-driver: Conor Mohan
Car: Ford Fiesta Rally4
Wins (JBRC): 2 **Other podiums (JBRC):** 3 **Stage wins (JBRC):** 10 **Championship position (JBRC):** 2nd, 103 points
A simply epic season. Considering he'd never rallied at this level or driven on gravel before 2021, Kelly had no right to take the title battle to the finale. Ultimately he missed out, but there's no shame in missing out to Creighton. Consistent yet fast, there's a very bright future ahead of this 22-year-old whose masterful Ulster win served as a season highlight.



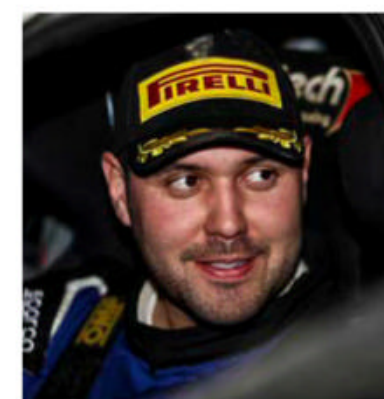
4 WILLIAM CREIGHTON

Co-driver: Liam Regan
Car: Ford Fiesta Rally4
Wins (JBRC): 4 **Other podiums (JBRC):** 1 **Stage wins (JBRC):** 33 **Championship position (JBRC):** 1st, 118 points
Finally. After being the JBRC bridesmaid twice before, Creighton wasn't going to let it happen again. His Junior WRC campaign brought on his pace and rally management and he duly secured the title many expected him to grab. But it wasn't easy. Missing the Grampian with a WRC clash and crashing on the Nicky Grist meant he had to win a string of rallies thereafter. He delivered.



5 GARRY PEARSON

Co-driver: Niall Burns
Car: Skoda Fabia R5/Mitsubishi Lancer E9
Wins (National): 3 **Other podiums (National):** 2 **Stage wins (National):** 17
Championship position (National): 1st, 110 points
The undisputed rally driver of 2021 in my opinion. However, his BRC National title was probably the least pressurised of his four successes, restricting Pearson from ranking higher. But that does not diminish his achievements. Untouchable in Scotland and blistering in what became the finale in



Wales, Pearson was the class act of a burgeoning class – up against some serious cars and some serious drivers like Stephen Petch.

6 MATTHEW WILSON



Co-driver: Stuart Loudon/Elliott Edmondson
Car: Ford Fiesta Rally2
Wins: 1 **Other podiums:** 1 **Stage wins:** 4
Championship position: 3rd, 53 points
Wilson's uninspiring World Rally Championship record makes him a hard one to read, but it's clear he's still rally sharp – testing M-Sport's Puma Rally1 can only help! A forgettable fifth on his return in Wales, Wilson stunned all to win the Grampian and probably should've been second in Yorkshire had he not made a small error on the final stage. A shame to only see him on three rounds this season.

7 KYLE WHITE



Co-driver: Sean Topping/Grace O'Brien
Car: Peugeot 208 R2
Wins (JBRC): 0 **Other podiums (JBRC):** 2 **Stage wins (JBRC):** 5 **Championship position (JBRC):** 5th, 45 points
A new name to the UK before the season, he certainly isn't now! White was mega in his little 208 R2 up against the turbocharged Fiestas. Second at Oulton and third at the Nicky Grist gave him an early series lead, but unfortunately reliability issues dogged his season thereafter. Still, the potential he showed was tremendous and it would be fantastic to see him back in a younger car next year.

8 JOHNNIE MULHOLLAND



Co-driver: Calum Maguire
Car: Ford Fiesta R2T
Wins (Academy): 6 **Other podiums (Academy):** 1 **Stage wins (Academy):** 45 **Championship position (Academy):** 1st, 125 points
Almost achieved the championship max of 130 points (he didn't play his joker at any point) and managed to secure fourth in Junior BRC despite his older car too. The bare statistics flatter Mulholland a bit as the class entry was low and Fraser Anderson was often faster but went through teething problems, but this was a deeply impressive, consistent season that bodes well for a JBRC attack in 2022.

9 RHYS YATES



Co-driver: James Morgan
Car: Ford Fiesta Rally2
Wins: 0 **Other podiums:** 2 **Stage wins:** 1 **Championship position:** 4th, 53 points
Unfortunate not to win the opener, Yates' season plateaued from there. With a distant fourth on the Nicky Grist and then third on the Grampian he moved into the championship lead. However his local event – the Trackrod – was a puncture-ridden disaster and a decision to skip Mull set the tone as he missed the next two as well. Would've been an intriguing prospect in the title fight had he stuck around longer.

10 TOM CAVE



Co-driver: Dale Furniss
Car: Ford Fiesta Rally2
Wins: 0 **Other podiums:** 1 **Stage wins:** 3 **Championship position:** 11th, 18 points
Perhaps a controversial pick given he only entered one round, but his ability to put Edwards to the sword on the Nicky Grist was fantastic entertainment – and deeply impressive given he hadn't rallied in over a year and never before in a Fiesta Rally2. A lack of budget prohibited Cave from contesting the season, but there's little doubt he'd have been a factor in the Edwards/Pryce scrap for the title had he been there.

CONGRATULATIONS MATT EDWARDS & OSIAN PRYCE ON 1ST & 2ND IN THE BRC

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FEATURE



Rally engineering reunited Williams' first title-winners in Saudi Arabia, writes Nick Garton

Jones in FW07/04 heads Villeneuve

A FITTING SALUTE IN SAUDI

It was incredibly poignant that, in the days after his passing, one of the cars that made Sir Frank Williams and his eponymous team into world-beaters emerged at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix from 40 years in hibernation.

By finding sponsors in Saudi Arabia during 1977-78, Williams secured the funding that he needed to turn his team from also-rans to World champions. However, while deals were being brokered, Lotus was busy demolishing the opposition on the track when its ground-effect experiment came good and drivers Mario Andretti and Ronnie Peterson conquered all.

Thanks to a little subterfuge – including junior Williams engineer Ross Brawn being smuggled into the Lotus transporter – the Williams design team of Patrick Head, Neil Oatley and Frank Dernie built its own ground-effect car for 1979. This was the FW07, which made its debut at the Spanish Grand Prix.

“Frank brought it over to America to test the day after the Long Beach Grand Prix, which I did in the FW06,” recalls the redoubtable Australian charger Alan Jones, Williams team leader from 1978-81, gazing upon his former mount in Jeddah.

“So, hopping out of 06 into 07 the following day at Ontario Motor Speedway, I did two laps and came in and said: ‘I now know why Andretti and Peterson were winning those bloody races!’”

As impressive as Jones found it, the FW07 wasn’t a winner out of the box. The team constructed quarter-scale mock-ups and took them to the windtunnel at Imperial College, London. When the Lotus design was extended to enclose the engine and transmission within the aerodynamic floor, the data showed that Williams had hit the jackpot.

These new parts debuted at Silverstone

for the British GP, where Jones stuck the car on pole position and team-mate Clay Regazzoni won the race after the Australian’s water pump failed. At the next race, the German GP, Jones would appear at the wheel of a new chassis, FW07/04, and duly headed Regazzoni home in a Williams 1-2. Two weeks later in Austria, Jones and ‘04’ would triumph once again and the chassis’ third victory would come in Canada after a mighty battle with Gilles Villeneuve’s Ferrari.

In January 1980, car and driver made their final racing appearance in Argentina. It was a messy affair in which the Buenos Aires track surface crumbled: Jones came off twice but held out to win the race. FW07/04 then became the team’s test hack until an accident at Donington that Jones says was the only time he thought he might die at the wheel of a Williams.

The Aussie ace went on to claim the 1980 drivers’ title (and the first of nine constructors’ championships for Williams), while the remains of FW07/04 were put back together and dispatched to Saudi Arabia as a display car. Eventually, it was spotted by journalist Eoin Young, who brokered a deal for it to be sold to an Australian collector. It was later sold at auction in 2010, when it travelled quietly back to Saudi Arabia.

This summer, FW07/04 was packed up in Riyadh and shipped to expert rally outfit Mellors Elliot Motorsport, best known for anchoring Proton’s competition programme. Alongside the team’s core rally business, Chris Mellors had established a secondary operation, Fifteen Eleven Design, restoring and improving classic cars.

“We hadn’t really pushed Fifteen Eleven until Covid came along and the rally world ground to a halt,” Mellors explains.

“It was just one or two cars per year, but then we restructured to keep our lads employed and I was doing some work with [former Ford Motorsport chief and MN correspondent] Martin Whitaker last year before he got the job as CEO for the Saudi F1 race.

“He came to the workshop and saw the Maserati that we had restored, which came second at the Salon Prive concours. That obviously got him thinking because he asked: could we restore a Williams F1 car?”

The challenge that Mellors accepted was to take a crash-damaged show car that had sat in silence for 40 years and get it back on track... in the space of three

months. “It was a lot of work,” he confirms with a racer’s understatement.

“The car had literally not been touched for 40 years. It was all original but the engine and gearbox were show items and there had been some significant damage to the front of the car.”

That would be the legacy of Jones’s Donington test shunt, which required fabricating new sections of the honeycomb tub to make it safe to drive, while the engine and transmission were refitted by experts including DFV wizard Geoff Richardson. As well as ensuring that the structure of the car was safe to drive, MEM had to restore it to a factory-fresh appearance as originally as possible.

“We refurbished the paintwork and graphics, in the same materials used in period,” says Mellors. “Everything is back to how it was 40 years ago – right down to scanning the mirrors digitally and remaking them.”

When FW07/04 was wheeled out into the F1 paddock in Jeddah, drivers including Damon Hill, Martin Brundle, Dario Franchitti and Emerson Fittipaldi all lined up for a turn at the wheel. “It’s been rather popular,” Mellors chuckles.

“The feedback we’ve had has been fantastic as well. Emerson Fittipaldi was really happy – he said the car had fantastic balance.”

Emmo’s delight was mirrored by guest-of-honour Jones, who was clearly thrilled to be reunited with the car that set him on the path to greatness. “I didn’t know this car existed in Saudi and I’m absolutely delighted to see it fully restored,” he says. “It’s in magnificent condition, the guys have done a beautiful job. From a personal point of view, I’m delighted to see it.”

Jones set the template for Williams drivers that few – if any – ever subsequently matched in the eyes of the team’s founder. A straight-talking bloke who could go toe-to-toe with the likes of Villeneuve, Piquet and Prost every week, the esteem in which Jones and Williams held each other was unique.

“I think one of the reasons why the relationship was so special was we were all a similar age, we all had a major goal to strive [for] and we all got on extremely well,” Jones explains. “We were friends – as well as an employer, Frank was a very good friend. And that all just culminated in a wonderful relationship that brought results.” ■

Photos: Motorsport Images, Saudi Arabian GP



F1 pundit Brundle sampled MEM’s handiwork



Every paint stroke and sticker was recreated



Dario Franchitti was among star drivers lining up to drive the Williams



Until August, FW07/04 was a dusty, battle-scarred relic in Saudi Arabia



By November, MEM had rebuilt the car to permit parade laps in safety

“I didn’t know the car existed in Saudi...”

Alan Jones

COLUMNIST

JACK FABBY



The 22-year-old mechanic-turned-racer tells us about on and off track with the Praga R1

Photos: Praga, Marc Bow, Dom Fraser

It was natural that I was going to get in a go-kart. My mum Joanne Fabby was one of the first females in karting and my granddad was an MSA steward and clerk of the course for Manchester and Buxton kart club for many years, and my mum met my dad through motorsport.

I jumped in a go-kart when I was about nine years old, and I caught the bug. I did some national stuff, mainly for fun; I was pretty aware I wasn't going to be Lewis Hamilton.

I then jumped into cars. When I got to about 16 or 17 I was really fortunate to do a Creventic Silverstone 24-hour race. I was in the second-slowest car but it was so much fun. We were one of the fastest cars in the night, and finished 15th from a grid of 40.

That told me I'm really good at endurance racing. I ended up driving a CN sports prototype car and this one really bit me, so prototype cars was the path I wanted to go down. I did a lot of LMP running; I was learning the cars as well as driving them.

But I was realistic: how many other young, straight, British, white, male racing drivers are trying to make it into a professional? So how else do I stay in an industry that I love? By becoming a mechanic, an engineer; hopefully at some point a team manager. That's the route I've gone down; I'm super privileged to work with VR Motorsport which is the Praga R1's UK dealer.

I was super fortunate to meet Vincent Randall of VR Motorsport, and he gave me an amazing opportunity last year to race the Praga in the Britcar Endurance series. I finished second, and another opportunity came up this year to drive a Praga.

I drove with Charlie Martin in 2021 which has been such an eye-opening experience. She's someone at the forefront of breaking down barriers in her community but also she's an amazing person, she helped me a lot with a positive outlook.

I got hit in the pitlane at Snetterton in the



Fabby has been able to race the Praga for the past two seasons and has routinely run at the front

second race, and that was a race I was convinced we were going to win. That was a really difficult time for me because I'd just left my previous job, I was really struggling mentally to deal with the pressure to perform. Charlie really helped me deal with not only racing drama but personal life things that were knocking me down.

Unfortunately we lost the championship on unforeseen events, but equally we've had some amazing situations. For example, straight out the blocks at Silverstone we won the first race. Charlie and I put as much effort as we possibly could into the year, which is all you can ever do in life.

I feel I'm a really good test and development driver because I understand how these cars work. I know the Praga from every nut, bolt and washer; they've been apart hundreds of times. I'll be driving around Donington Park and thinking of set-up changes while driving down Craners flat in sixth gear.

I came with an ambition to make the Praga faster and more exciting, but also realistically we're trying to market this car to pro drivers and amateur drivers. So how do we make it welcoming at the same time? A lot of work went into that.

We took a car this year that was super-fast but a little bit lairy for the amateurs, and now

we've got a car that is super-fast no matter who's driving it. Look at the gap between Jimmy Broadbent and Gordie Much at the start of the year to the gap at the end of the year. That's not because Gordie's got slower, that's because Jimmy's had a car that will help him drive faster. I get a lot of satisfaction out of that.

For 2022 I have officially nothing in store, but I'm really excited. At Praga we are partnering up with some amazing people and it gives me a lot of motivation to work on a cold Monday morning.

I know that my name is involved in conversations to drive a Praga again next year, I'm not personally involved in the conversations though. I'm actually very comfortable where I'm at. I'm trying to make a proper career in motorsport. Obviously I'd love that to be driving a race car, that is my absolute passion.

Also a good friend of mine has got a really cool classic car to race. That's going to be for pleasure, not so much for competitiveness.

I'd love to drive a Praga again especially with how competitive it's going to be next year in its new one-make championship, the Praga Cup. But equally I'm realistic, I understand how motorsport works. So we'll see what happens.



Fabby feels his work as a mechanic and engineer makes him a strong test and development driver



Fabby and Martin won Silverstone's round one

"I thought how do I stay in an industry that I love? By becoming a mechanic"

WHAT'S ON

YOUTUBE

The British Rally Championship made a welcome return this year, and in this week's Motorsport News Luke Barry reviews the captivating 2021 campaign in detail. And, thanks to Motorsport UK's YouTube account, you can match Luke's prose with plenty of moving pictures from the season.

There are highlights of every BRC round, with a few other things from the campaign thrown in besides, at this playlist: youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZFfk_hp9n4wsaEialMSIHOC2EVsv5Th9.

And more specifically there is 15

minutes on the recent title-deciding round, the Ulster Rally, that you can watch at: youtube.com/watch?v=jWoeDO_rew4 or by searching: 'British Rally Championship – Ulster Rally – Round 7 – Highlights'.

The Ulster contest was a winner-takes-all showdown between the season's two protagonists, who were reigning champion Matt Edwards and the challenger, his team-mate and pre-event points leader Osian Pryce, both in Melvyn Evans Motorsport VW Polo R5s.

And the video – narrated by the

inimitable and enthusiastic Colin Clark – tracks another fight between the pair in Ulster. There's plenty of footage of the rapid and brave pursuit through picturesque scenery, plus interviews.

It also contains onboard footage, combined with driver audio, on the crucial moment for deciding the title destination. The video also doesn't neglect the Junior BRC title fight as William Creighton aimed to resist Eamonn Kelly. There's also the National fight although by Ulster that title was already wrapped up.

Graham Keilloh



Edwards had a fight on his hands in Ulster

TV GUIDE

Formula 1's championship battle comes to its conclusion this weekend at a tweaked Yas Marina circuit for Abu Dhabi's day-night event. Sky Sports F1's coverage starts in the usual way with The F1 Show at 1500hrs-1600hrs today (Thursday) followed by the drivers' press conference.

Ted Kravitz's notebook qualifying review is at 1600hrs-1630hrs on Saturday while his race version is the same time on Sunday. Channel 4's qualifying highlights are at 1855hrs-2025hrs on Saturday and for the race they're 1730hrs-2000hrs on Sunday.

Eurosport 1 shows the best of this year's Le Mans 24-Hour race at

0300hrs-0400hrs in Friday's wee hours, and it's on again in Tuesday's small hours at 0400hrs-0500hrs on Eurosport 2.

ITV4 has an eclectic range of motorsport to watch this week. Early on Sunday Motorsport Mundial at 0630hrs-0650hrs promises IndyCar and Trans Am action as well as a look at the World Rally Championship's Monza finale.

And still early on Sunday on ITV4 there's British Formula 4 and Ginetta GT5 Challenge racing from Croft at 0715hrs-0810hrs. That's shown again on Monday on ITV1 at an ungodly 0315hrs-0405hrs.

On Premier Sports 2 on Tuesday you can catch the recent Bathurst



Formula 1 reaches its climax

1000 at 1600hrs-1800hrs. While on Sunday on the same channel from 0800hrs there are half-hour season reviews in turn of the 2021 NASCAR Trucks series, then of the NASCAR Xfinity series and finally of the NASCAR Cup series.

Graham Keilloh

LIVE TV

FORMULA 1
ABU DHABI GRAND PRIX
YAS MARINA CIRCUIT

Practice 1: Friday, 0900hrs-1045hrs, Sky Sports F1
Practice 2: Friday, 1245hrs-1425hrs, Sky Sports F1
Practice 3: Saturday, 0945hrs-1110hrs, Sky Sports F1
Qualifying: Saturday, 1200hrs-1440hrs, Sky Sports F1
Race: Sunday, 1130hrs-1600hrs (start time 1300hrs), Sky Sports F1

FORMULA 2
ABU DHABI

Practice: Friday, 0735hrs-0820hrs, Sky Sports F1
Qualifying: Friday, 1425hrs-1505hrs, Sky Sports F1
Sprint Race 1: Saturday, 0810hrs-0915hrs, Sky Sports F1
Sprint Race 2: Saturday, 1440hrs-1540hrs, Sky Sports F1
Feature Race: Sunday, 0850hrs-1010hrs, Sky Sports F1

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Legends in all shapes and sizes at Brands, from Gary Isherwood



Richard Salisbury's Malton photo



Hyundai dramas, from Gary Hill



Peter Atkins enjoyed Walter Hayes



Donington test, by Rich Cranston

Photographs must be of a good quality and please send no more than three images

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The original Stig tackles the MN readers' questions

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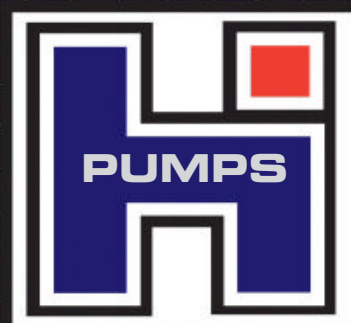


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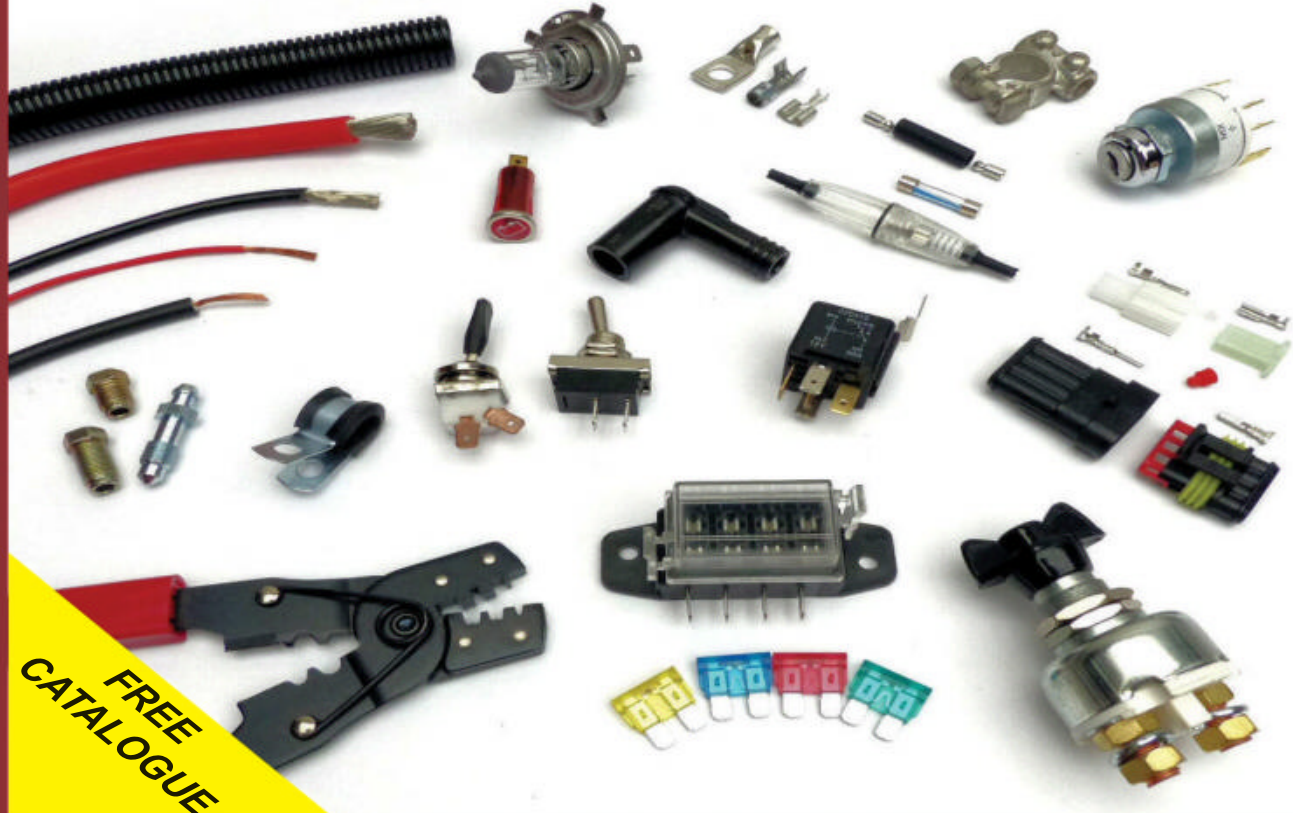
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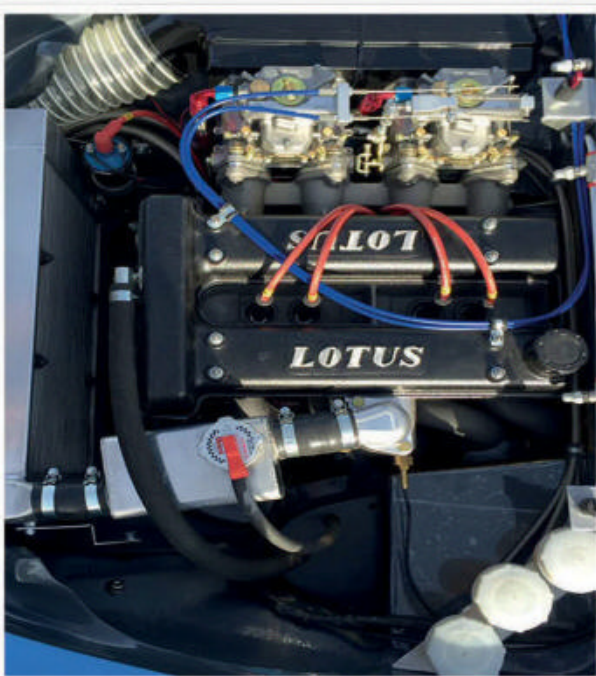
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